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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

VOLUME XLVII

EDITION DEFINITIVE

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No. 333

The Human Comedy

PHILOSOPHIC AND ANALYTIC STUDIES

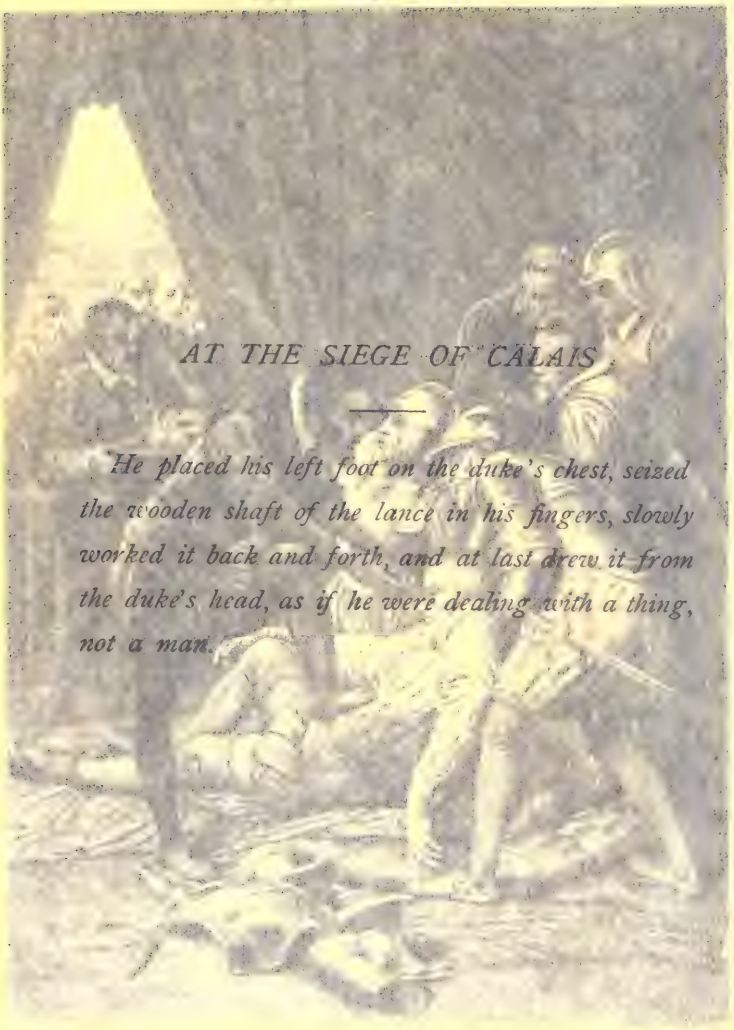
VOLUME VII

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AT THE SIEGE OF CHARAX

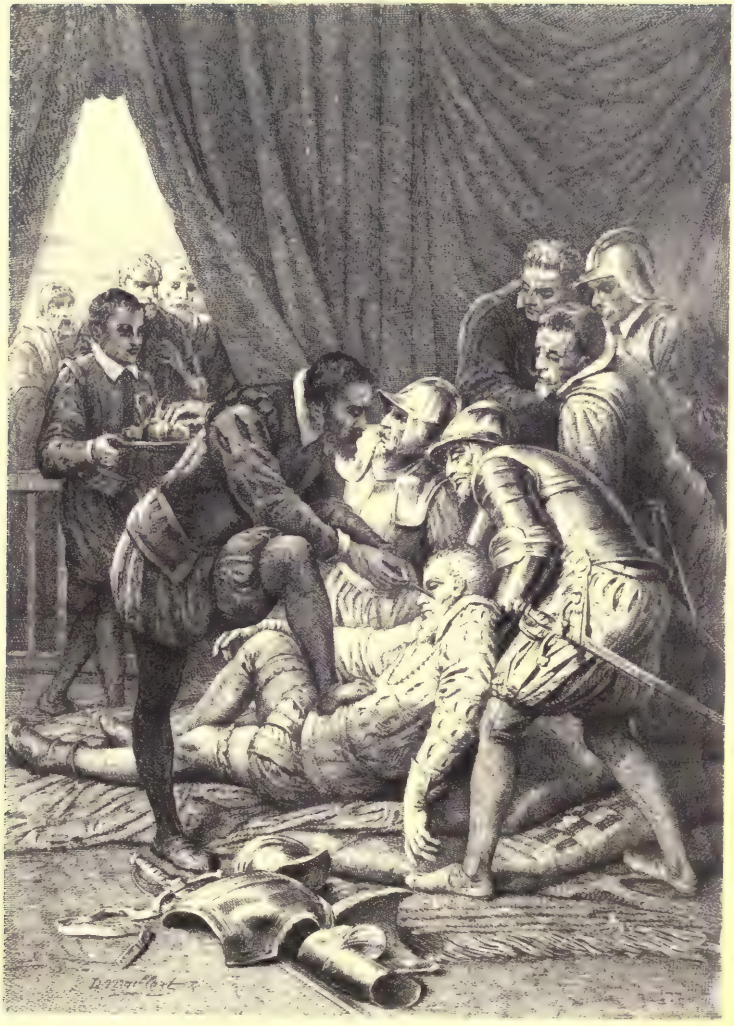
He placed his left foot on the duke's chest, seized the wooden shaft of the lance in his fingers, slowly wrenched it back and forth, and at last drew it from the duke's breast, as if he were decoding with a thing not a man.



AT THE SIEGE OF CALAIS

He placed his left foot on the duke's chest, seized the wooden shaft of the lance in his fingers, slowly worked it back and forth, and at last drew it from the duke's head, as if he were dealing with a thing, not a man.

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Honoré de Balzac

AT THE SIEGE OF CHLAIS

He pressed his left foot on the duke's chest, seized the scoundrel sharply by the lance in his fingers, sharply scorched it back until fourth, and at last threw it from the duke's head, as if he were clearing earth a thing not a mean.

AT THE SIEGE OF CALAIS

He placed his left foot on the duke's chest, seized the wooden shaft of the lance in his fingers, slowly worked it back and forth, and at last drew it from the duke's head, as if he were dealing with a thing, not a man.

Honoré de Balzac NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

CATHERINE DE' MEDICI

BY

G. BURNHAM IVES

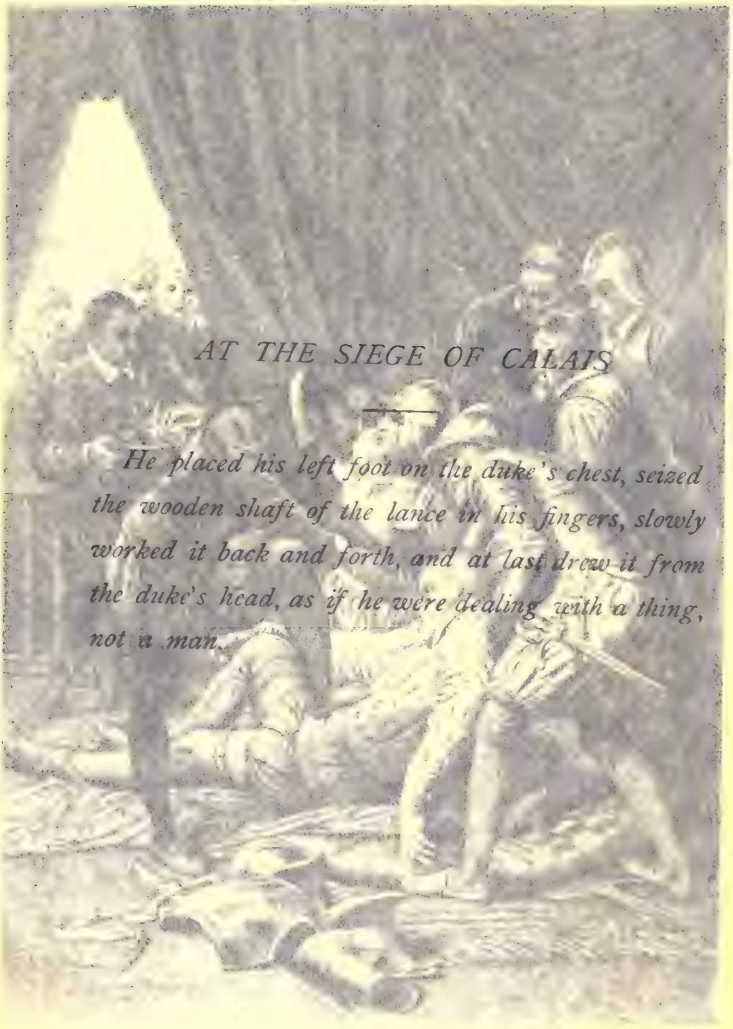
WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS BY HENRI-JOSEPH DUBOUCHET, AFTER PAINTINGS BY DIOGÈNE-ULYSSE-NAPOLÉON MAILLART

IN ONE VOLUME

BY

GEORGE BARRIE & SON

PHILADELPHIA



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PHILADELPHIA

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CATHERINE DE' MEDICI

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TO MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DE PASTORET

Member of the Academy of Fine Arts

When one considers the amazing number of volumes published with the view of fixing the point at which Hannibal crossed the Alps, and that no one can say to-day whether he went, according to Whitaker and Rivaz, by way of Lyon, Geneva, the Saint-Bernard, and the valley of Aosta; or, according to Letronne, Follard, Saint-Simon, and Fortia d'Urban, by the Isère, Grenoble, Saint-Bonnet, Mont Genèvre, Fenestrelle, and the Suza pass; or, according to Larauza, by Mont Cenis and Suza; or, according to Strabo, Polybius, and De Luc, by way of the Rhône, Vienne, Yennes, and the Mont du Chat; or, according to the opinion of some judicious persons, by way of Genoa, La Bochetta, and La Scrivia, which opinion I share, and which Napoléon adopted,—to say nothing of the vinegar with which other scholars have sprinkled the Alpine cliffs,—one can but be astonished, monsieur le marquis, to see modern history so neglected that its most important points are obscure and that names which should be held in veneration are still burdened with most odious calumnies. We may remark, in passing, that Hannibal's passage of the Alps has become almost problematical by dint

of having light thrown upon it. For instance, Père Ménestrier believes that the Scoras mentioned by Polybius is the Saône; Letronne, Larauza, and Schweighauser identify it as the Isère; Cochard, a Lyonnais scholar, is convinced that it is the Drôme: now, who that has eyes can fail to observe great geographical and linguistic resemblances between Scoras and Scrivia, to say nothing of the almost certainty that the Carthaginian fleet anchored either at Spezzia or in the roadstead of Genoa? I could understand all this painstaking investigation, if there were any doubt about the battle of Cannes; but, inasmuch as its results are perfectly certain, where is the use of blackening so much paper with such a mass of conjectures which are in some sense the arabesques of hypothesis; while the history that is of the most importance to us of the present day, the history of the Reformation, is so full of obscure points that we do not know the name of the man who propelled a vessel by steam at Barcelona* in the days when Luther and Calvin were plotting the insurrection of thought? You and I have reached, I believe, the same conclusion, after investigating, each in his own way, the grand and noble figure of Catherine de' Medici. Wherefore it seemed to me most fitting that my historical study of that queen should be inscribed to a writer who has worked so

* The author of the experiment at Barcelona was probably Salomon, of Caux, not Caus. That great man was always unlucky; even after his death his name was mutilated. Salomon, whose portrait, taken from life at the age of forty-six, was found by the author of the HUMAN COMEDY at Heidelberg, was born at Caux, in Normandy.

long at the history of the Reformation, and that I should thus do public homage to the high character and loyalty of the man of monarchical principles, homage that may be of value because of its rarity.

Paris, January 1842.

INTRODUCTION

There is generally a cry of paradox when scholars, having discovered a historical error, seek to correct it; but whoever has studied modern history with care cannot doubt that historians are privileged liars who lend their pens to the support of popular superstitions, precisely as most of the newspapers of to-day merely express the opinions of their readers.

Historical independence has always been much more rare in laymen than in ecclesiastics. It is from the Benedictines, one of the glories of France, that we obtain the purest light in matters of history, provided always that their interests are not involved. The result has been that, since the middle of the eighteenth century, there have appeared divers able and learned controversialists, who, impressed by the necessity of correcting the popular errors accredited by historians, have published some remarkable works. Monsieur de Launoy, for instance, who has been called the *Dislodger of Saints*, waged a pitiless war on the saints who had been smuggled into the Church. In like manner, the emulators of the Benedictines, the too little known members of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, began to issue their *mémoires*, remarkable for their patient labor,

their erudition, and their logic, upon various obscure points of history. Voltaire, too, for an unworthy purpose, with deplorable passion, often turned the light of his intellect on historical prejudices. Diderot undertook, with that aim, a tediously long book upon one period in the history of imperial Rome. It may be, that, except for the French Revolution, *criticism*, applied to history, would have paved the way for an accurate and reliable history of France, for which the materials were collected so long ago by our great Benedictines. Louis XVI., a man of sound judgment, himself transiated the English work wherein Walpole tried to explain the character of Richard III.,—a work which aroused much attention in the last century.

How does it happen that personages so celebrated as kings and queens, persons of such eminence as generals of the army, become objects of horror or derision? Half of the world hesitates between the song concerning Marlborough and the history of England, just as we hesitate between history and the popular beliefs concerning Charles IX. Whenever great conflicts take place between the masses and the ruling authorities, the people create in their own minds an *ogresque* personage, if we may venture to invent a word to express a well-defined idea. In our own times, for instance, except for the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, and the controversies between royalists and imperialists, the character of Napoléon would be entirely misunderstood. A few more Abbés de Pradt, a few more newspaper articles, and

Napoléon would have been transformed from an emperor to an ogre. How do such errors gain currency and credence? the mysterious thing is done under our very eyes without our noticing it. No one realizes how much consistency the invention of printing has given both to the envy which clings to persons in high station and to the popular pleasantries which reverse the true significance of a great historical fact. For instance, the Prince de Polignac's name is given throughout France to the sorry nags who have to be constantly beaten. But who knows what the future will think of the Prince de Polignac's *coup d'Etat?* As the result of a caprice on Shakespeare's part,—perhaps it was a stroke of vengeance like Beaumarchais's against Bergasse,—Begearss,—Falstaff is the type of absurdity in England; his name provokes laughter; he is the king of clowns. In reality, instead of being enormously stout, absurdly licentious, vain, a drunken old corrupter of youth, Falstaff was one of the most important men of his time, a knight of the Garter, and an officer of high rank in the army. On the accession of Henry V., Falstaff was thirty-four years old at most. He distinguished himself at the battle of Agincourt, where he captured the Duc d'Alençon, and in 1420 took Montereau, which was stubbornly defended. And under Henry VI. he defeated ten thousand French with fifteen hundred tired and starving soldiers.

So much for war. If we turn from war to literature, Rabelais, a sober man who drank nothing but

water, is commonly supposed among us to have been a lover of good cheer and an inveterate toper. Innumerable absurd tales have been told concerning the author of one of the best books in all French literature, *Pantagruel*. Aretino, the friend of Titian and the Voltaire of his time, has in our day a reputation directly contrary to his character and his works, a reputation which he owes to a coarseness of the imagination in harmony with the writings of that period, when the *drolatique* was held in honor, when queens and cardinals wrote tales which are called licentious to-day. We could multiply examples of this sort *ad infinitum*. In France, and during the most serious portions of modern history, no woman, except possibly Brunehaut or Fredegonde, has suffered more from popular misconception than Catherine de' Medici; whereas Marie de' Medici, all whose acts were injurious to France, escapes the odium which should attach to her name. Marie squandered the treasures amassed by Henri IV.; she never purged herself of the reproach of having known of the proposed assassination of the king; D'Epernon, who failed to turn aside Ravaillac's blow, and who knew the man well, was one of her intimate circle; she forced her son to banish her from France, where she was giving encouragement to the rebellious schemes of her other son, Gaston; and Richelieu's triumph over her on the *Day of Dupes* was due solely to the cardinal's disclosing to Louis XIII. certain secret documents concerning the death of Henri IV. Catherine de' Medici, on the

other hand, saved the crown of France; she upheld the royal authority under circumstances which would have caused more than one great prince to succumb. Being confronted by such rebellious and ambitious subjects as the Guises and the Bourbons, by men like the two cardinals of Lorraine and the two Balafrés, the two princes of Condé, Queen Jeanne d'Albret, Henri IV., the Constable Montmorency, Calvin, the Colignys, and Théodore de Bèze, she was called upon to display the rarest qualities, the most precious gifts of the statesman, under the fire of the mockeries of the Calvinist press. Those facts are certainly beyond question. So that, to him who delves in the history of the sixteenth century in France, the figure of Catherine de' Medici appears like that of a great king. The calumnies once scattered to the winds by facts laboriously unearthed amid the contradictory statements of pamphleteers and the fictitious anecdotes, everything is explained to the glory of this extraordinary woman, who had none of the weaknesses of her sex, who lived a virtuous life amid the intrigues of the most licentious court in Europe, and who succeeded, despite her scarcity of money, in building noble monuments, as if to make good the losses caused by the demolishing spirit of the Calvinists, who inflicted as many wounds on art as on the body politic.

Placed between princes who claimed to be the heirs of Charlemagne, and a seditious younger branch who wished to bury the Constable Bourbon's

treachery under the throne, Catherine, compelled to combat a heresy which was near devouring the throne, friendless, detecting treachery in the leaders of the Catholic party and visions of a republic in the Calvinist party, employed the most dangerous but the surest weapon in politics, cunning! She resolved to cajole, successively, the party which sought the downfall of the House of Valois, the Bourbons who desired the crown, and the reformers, the radicals of that period, who dreamed of an impossible republic, like those of the present day, who, however, have nothing to reform. And so long as she lived, the Valois retained the throne. The great De Thou showed a keen appreciation of her worth when he wrote, on being informed of her death:

"It is not simply a woman who has died, but royalty itself!"

Catherine had in very truth the sentiment of royalty in the highest degree; so that she defended it with marvellous courage and persistence. The reproaches which Calvinist writers have heaped upon her are clearly her greatest claim to glory, for she incurred them only because of her triumphs. Could she have triumphed otherwise than by stratagem? Therein lies the whole question. As for violence, that method brings up one of the most controverted questions in politics, a question which has been decided in our day on the square where they have erected a huge stone from Egypt, to induce forgetfulness of regicide and as an emblem of the present

system of materialist politics by which we are governed; it was decided at the Carmes and the Abbaye; it was decided on the steps of Saint-Roch; it was decided before the Louvre in 1830, once more by the people against the king, as it was decided by the best of Lafayette's republics against the republican insurrection at Saint-Merri and on Rue Transnonnain. All ruling powers, legitimate or illegitimate, must defend themselves when they are assailed; but, strangely enough, while the people are considered heroic in their victory over the nobility, the ruler is called an assassin in his duel with the people. And if he is beaten, after his appeal to force, he is called a fool as well. The present government may try to save itself by two laws from the same disease which attacked Charles X., and of which that prince tried to rid himself by two ordinances. What a bitter mockery that would be! Are sovereigns to be allowed to meet stratagem with stratagem? may they kill those who seek to kill them? The massacres of the Revolution answer the massacres of Saint-Bartholomew. The people, having become king, treated the king and the nobility as the king and nobility treated the rebels of the sixteenth century. So that the popular writers, who know very well that, under similar circumstances, the people would do the same thing again, are entirely inexcusable when they blame Catherine de' Medici and Charles IX.

All power, as Casimir Perier said when he had an opportunity to learn what power should be, is a

permanent conspiracy. We admire the anti-social maxims put forth by some audacious writers; why, then, should social truths be met with disfavor in France when they are boldly proclaimed? That question in itself explains all historical errors. Apply the solution of that question to the ruinous doctrines which flatter popular passions, and to the conservative doctrines which hold in check the wild or foolish enterprises of the people, and you will find the reason for the popularity of some personages and the unpopularity of others. Laubardemont and Laffemas were, like certain men of the present day, devoted to the defence of the power in which they believed. Whether soldiers or judges, they obeyed a royal authority. D'Orthez would be dismissed to-day for having misunderstood the orders of the ministry, but Charles IX. allowed him to retain the government of his province. A democracy has to reckon with no one, a monarchy has to reckon with its subjects, great and small alike.

Catherine, like Philip II., and the Duke of Alva, like the Guises and Cardinal Granville, foresaw the effect of the Reformation on the future of Europe. They saw monarchies, religion, the royal authority, shaken to their foundations! Catherine, from the closet of the kings of France, at once wrote the death-warrant of that spirit of investigation which threatened the framework of modern societies, a warrant which Louis XIV. finally executed. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was an unfortunate measure solely because of the irritation of Europe against

Louis XIV. At another time, England, Holland, and the Empire would not have encouraged exiled Frenchmen to seek refuge within their borders, or given aid to rebellion in France.

Why deny now to the majestic adversary of the most resultless of heresies the grandeur which she derived from her very struggle against it? The Calvinists have written a great deal against the stratagem of Charles IX.; but cast your eye over France: as you gaze upon the ruins of innumerable demolished churches, as you probe the deep wounds inflicted by the reformers on the fabric of society, as you realize how pitilessly they revenged themselves, as you deplore the evils of individualism, the pest of the France of to-day, whose seeds were planted in their agitation of the question of liberty of conscience, you will ask yourself on which side were the executioners. As Catherine is made to say in the third part of this Study: "There are, unfortunately, at all periods, hypocritical writers ready to bewail the fate of two hundred knaves opportunely executed." Cæsar, who tried to move the Senate to compassion for the faction of Catiline, would perhaps have triumphed over Cicero, if he had had newspapers and an opposition at his orders.

There is another consideration which explains the disfavor in which Catherine is held by historians and the common people. In France, the opposition has always been protestant because it has never had any other policy than *negation;* it has inherited the theories of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Protestants,

concerning the awe-inspiring words, liberty, progress, tolerance, and philosophy. Two centuries were employed by the opponents of lawful authority in establishing the doubtful doctrine of *free-will*. Two other centuries were employed in developing the first corollary of free-will, liberty of conscience. Our century is trying to establish the second corollary, political liberty.

Seated between the fields already traversed and those still to be traversed, Catherine and the Church proclaimed the salutary basic principle of modern societies, *una fides*, *unus Dominus*, exerting their power of life and death over innovators. Although she was beaten in the struggle, succeeding centuries have justified Catherine. The product of free-will, religious liberty, and political liberty—we must not confound the latter with civil liberty—is the France of to-day. What is the France of 1840? a country devoted exclusively to material interests, devoid of patriotism and of conscience; where the ruling powers are without strength; where election, the result of free-will and political liberty, brings to the surface none but mediocrities; where brute force has become necessary against popular violence, and where discussion, extended to the most trivial matters, checks all action on the part of the political body; where money rules all questions, and where individualism, a lamentable result of the infinitesimal subdivision of inheritances, which annihilates the family, will consume everything, even the nation, which selfishness will some day betray to the invader. People

will say to themselves: "Why not the Czar?" as they said on a previous occasion: "Why not the Duc d'Orléans?"—Few things are of any consequence now; but, fifty years hence, nothing will be of any consequence.

According to Catherine's theory, and the theory of all those who wish for a well-ordered society, *social man*, the subject has no free-will, should not be allowed to *profess* liberty of conscience or to enjoy political liberty. But as no society can exist without guarantees given to the subject against the sovereign, the result is that the subject enjoys certain *liberties*, subject to restrictions. Liberty, no; but liberties, yes; liberties clearly defined and characterized. Such an arrangement is consonant with the nature of things. It certainly is beyond human power to prevent liberty of thought, and no sovereign can lessen the power of money. The great politicians, who were beaten in that long struggle,—it lasted five centuries,—conceded great liberties to their subjects; but they conceded neither liberty to publish thoughts antagonistic to society, nor the indefinite liberty of the subject. To their minds, in politics, *subject* and *free* are contradictory terms, just as the theory that *all citizens are equal* is mere nonsense to which nature gives the lie every hour in the day. To recognize the necessity of a religion, the necessity of rulers, and to allow subjects the right to deny the religion, to attack public worship, to oppose the ruler's exercise of power by the public expression, communicable and communicated, of thought, is an impossibility to

which the Catholics of the sixteenth century would not listen. Alas! the victory of Calvinism will cost France much more dear than it has cost thus far, for the religious and political sects of to-day, humanitarians, equalitarians, etc., are the tail of Calvinism, and, by reason of the shortcomings of the ruling powers, their contempt for intelligence, their love for material interests, upon which they choose mainly to rely, although they are the most treacherous of all supports, the genius of destruction will carry the day once more over the genius of preservation, unless Providence shall intervene. The assailants, who have nothing to lose and everything to gain, have a perfect mutual understanding; while their powerful adversaries are unwilling to make any sort of sacrifice, either of money or of self-love, to attract defenders.

The printing-press came to the assistance of the opposition inaugurated by the Vaudois and the Albigenses. The moment that human thought, instead of condensing itself as it was obliged to do in order to retain the most communicable form, donned a multitude of garments and became the people, instead of remaining divinely *axiomatic*, as it were, there were two multitudes to contend against,—the multitude of ideas, and the multitude of men. Royal power bit the dust in that war, and we are witnesses, in our day, in France, of its last struggle to recover itself by a combination with elements which make it difficult, not to say impossible. Power is an *act*, and the elective principle is *discussion*. No sound policy

is possible with the right of discussion permanently established.

We should therefore consider her a very great woman who was able to foresee that future and who struggled against it so courageously. The House of Bourbon owed it to Catherine de' Medici that it was able to succeed the House of Valois, that it found a crown to wear. Suppose that the second Balafré had been alive—powerful as the Béarnais was, it is doubtful if he would have succeeded in obtaining the crown, when we consider how dearly the Duc de Mayenne and the remnant of the Guise faction sold it to him. Observe this—that the necessary methods resorted to by Catherine, who had every reason to reproach herself for the deaths of François II. and Charles IX., both of whom died just in time to save her, are not the subject of the reproaches of the Calvinist and modern writers! Even if there were no poisoning, as certain grave authors have charged, there was scheming even more iniquitous: it is beyond question that she prevented Paré from saving one, and that she inflicted a prolonged moral assassination on the other. The sudden death of François II., the shrewd and crafty manœuvring which brought about the death of Charles IX., inflicted no injury on the Calvinistic interests; the causes of these two events lay in the more exalted spheres, and were suspected neither by the writers nor by the people of that time; they were divined only by the De Thous and the L'Hôpitals, by the most enlightened minds or

by the leaders of the two parties which coveted or defended the crown, and which found such means necessary. Strangely enough, the popular ballads assailed Catherine's morals! Everyone knows the anecdote of the soldier who was roasting a goose in the guard-house of the château of Tours during the conference between Catherine and Henri IV., and singing a song wherein the queen was insulted by a comparison with the heaviest piece of ordnance which the Calvinists possessed. Henri IV. drew his sword to kill the man; Catherine stopped him and contented herself by saying to the insulter:

"After all, it is Catherine who gives you the goose!"

If the executions at Amboise were attributed to Catherine, if the Calvinists made that superior woman the responsible author of all the miseries inseparable from that contest, she suffered the same fate as Robespierre, concerning whom the judgment of posterity is yet to be made. Catherine was cruelly punished, by the way, for her preference for the Duc d'Anjou, which led her to betray the interests of the two elder sons. Henri III., who, like all spoiled children, had reached a condition of the utmost indifference toward his mother, plunged of his own motion into the life of debauchery which made of him what his mother had made of Charles IX., a childless husband, a king without heirs. Unluckily, the Duc d'Alençon, Catherine's last male child, died—a natural death. Catherine made incredible efforts to combat her son's passion. History

has preserved the incident of the supper party of nude women in the gallery at Chenonçeaux, on the return from Poland, which was ineffectual, however, in curing Henri III. of his bad habits. That great queen's last words summarized her policy, which is so consonant with good sense that we see all the cabinets of Europe putting it in practice under similar circumstances.

"*Well cut, my son!*" she said, when Henri III. came to her on her death-bed to inform her that the enemy of the crown had been put to death; "*now, we must sew up the hole.*"

Her meaning was that the throne must at once effect a reconciliation with the House of Lorraine, and make use of it, as the only method of forestalling the effects of the hatred of the Guises, by opening to them anew the prospect of enveloping the king in their influence; but the persistent cunning of a woman,—and an Italian,—which she had always employed, was incompatible with the voluptuary's life led by Henri III. When the great mother—*mater castrorum*—was dead, the political force of the Valois died.

Before undertaking to write the history of morals in action, the author of this Study patiently and minutely investigated the principal reigns of French history, the quarrel between the Bourguignons and the Armagnacs, between the Guises and the Valois, each of which occupies a century. It was his purpose to write a history of picturesque France. Isabelle de Bavière, Catherine and Marie de' Medici

fill an enormous space therein, dominate the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and lead to the age of Louis XIV. Of these three queens, Catherine is the most interesting and most beautiful. Hers was a virile domination, dishonored neither by Isabelle's terrible love-intrigues, nor by the still more terrible, although less known, intrigues of Marie de' Medici. Isabelle invited the English into France against her son, loved the Duc d'Orléans, her brother-in-law, and Boisbourdon. Marie de' Medici's account is even heavier. Neither of them had any political genius. In the course of these studies and these comparisons, the author became thoroughly convinced of Catherine's grandeur of character; as he became more and more familiar with the ever-increasing difficulties of her position, he realized how unjustly historians, writing one and all under the influence of the Protestants, have treated the queen; and the result was the three sketches here presented, wherein some erroneous opinions concerning her, concerning the persons who surrounded her, and concerning the occurrences of her time, are combated. The reason for including this work among the PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES is this: that it exhibits the spirit of an epoch, and that the influence of thought can be clearly traced in it. But before entering upon the political arena where Catherine was confronted by the two great difficulties of her career, it is necessary to give a summary of her previous life, written from the standpoint of an impartial critic, so that we may have an idea of the whole course of that momentous,

royal existence down to the moment when the first part of this Study begins.

Never, in any epoch, in any country, in any reigning family, was there more contempt for *legitimacy* than in the famous family of Medici. They held the same doctrine concerning sovereignty which Russia professes to-day: Every individual to whom the throne falls becomes the true, the lawful sovereign. Mirabeau well said: "There has been but one *mésalliance* in my family, that of the Medici;" for, all the efforts of paid genealogists to the contrary, notwithstanding, it is certain that the Medici, prior to Averard de' Medici, gonfalonier of Florence, in 1314, were humble Florentine tradesmen, who became very rich. The first member of that family who occupies an important position in the history of the famous Tuscan republic is Salvestro de' Medici, who became gonfalonier in 1378. This Salvestro had two sons, Cosmo and Lorenzo de' Medici.

From Cosmo were descended Lorenzo the Magnificent, the Duc de Nemours, the Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father; Pope Leo X., Pope Clement VII., and Alessandro, not Duke of Florence, as some have called him, but *Duca della città di Penna*, a title bestowed by Pope Clement VII. as a stepping-stone to the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany.

From Lorenzo were descended Lorenzino, the Florentine Brutus, who killed Duke Alessandro; Cosmo, the first grand duke, and all the sovereigns of Tuscany down to 1737, when the family became extinct.

But neither of these two branches, the Cosmo branch or the Lorenzo branch, reigned in a direct line, until Tuscany was reduced to subjection by the father of Marie de' Medici, after which its grand dukes succeeded one another in natural order. For instance, Alessandro de' Medici, who bore the title of *Duca della città di Penna*, and who was assassinated by Lorenzo, was the son of the Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father, and a Moorish slave. Thus Lorenzino, the legitimate son of Lorenzo, had a twofold right to kill Alessandro, both as a usurper in his family and as the oppressor of the city. Some historians claim that Alessandro was a son of Clement VII. This bastard owed his recognition as the chief magistrate of the republic and as head of the family of the Medici to his marriage with Margaret of Austria, natural daughter of Charles V.

Francesco de' Medici, the husband of Bianca Capella, accepted as his son a child of the people purchased by that famous Venetian, and, strange to relate! Ferdinand, when he succeeded Francesco, upheld the claims of that supposititious heir. He was known as Don Antonio de' Medici, and was looked upon as one of the family throughout four reigns; he won the affection of every member, rendered valuable services to the family, and was universally regretted.

Almost all the earlier Medici had natural children, whose careers were always brilliant. For instance, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, who became Pope Clement VII., was an illegitimate son of Giuliano I.

Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici was also a bastard, and he came very near becoming Pope and head of the family.

Some anecdote-makers insist that the Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father, once said to her: *A figlia d'inganno non manca mai figliuolanza*,—A bright girl can always find a way to have children,—apropos of a certain physical malformation by which her betrothed husband, Henri, second son of François I., was afflicted.

Now, Lorenzo II. de' Medici, Catherine's father, who married in 1518, for his second wife, Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, died on April 28, 1519, a few days after his wife, whose death was caused by bringing into the world her daughter Catherine. Catherine, therefore, lost father and mother almost as soon as she saw the light. Hence the strange vicissitudes of her childhood, which was involved in the sanguinary combats between the Florentines, seeking to regain their liberty, and the Medici, who were determined to reign over Florence, and who behaved with so much circumspection that Catherine's father bore the title of Duke of Urbino. After his death, the legitimate head of the family of Medici was Pope Leo X., who governed Florence through Giulio de' Medici, then cardinal, the illegitimate son of Giuliano. Leo X. was Catherine's great-uncle, and this Cardinal Giulio, who became Clement VII., was uncle *by the left hand* only. It was that fact which caused Brantôme jestingly to speak of that pope as *an uncle in Notre-Dame*. It

was during the siege of Florence, undertaken by the Medici to re-establish their power in the city, that the republican party, not content with having confined Catherine, then nine years of age, in a convent, after having stripped her of all her property, proposed to expose her to the fire of the artillery between two loop-holes, at the suggestion of a certain Battista Cei. Bernardo Castiglione went still further, in a council held to discuss the termination of the business; he advised that, instead of delivering Catherine to the Pope, who was clamoring for her, they ought to put her in the hands of the soldiers to be dishonored. All popular revolutions clearly resemble one another. The policy of Catherine, who was so devoted to the interests of the royal power, may have been induced by such scenes, which could not have passed unnoticed by an Italian child of nine.

The elevation of Alessandro de' Medici, to which the bastard Clement VII. contributed so largely, was mainly due, doubtless, to the very fact of his own illegitimacy and to Charles V.'s affection for his celebrated natural daughter, Margaret. So that the Pope and the emperor were actuated by the same sentiment. At that epoch, Venice possessed the commerce of the world, Rome its moral government; Italy still reigned through the poets, the generals, and statesmen born within her borders. Never, in any age, has such an interesting, such a vast assemblage of men of genius been seen. There were so many of them at that period that even the inferior

princes were superior men. Italy was fairly running over with talent, audacity, learning, poesy, wealth, and gallantry, although rent by constant internal wars, and although it was the rendezvous of all the conquerors who quarrelled with one another over the possession of its fairest provinces. When men are so strong, they are not afraid to admit their weakness. Hence, doubtless, that golden age of bastards. We must, however, do the natural children of the family of Medici the justice to say that they were devoted to the glory and increase in wealth and power of that family. Thus, as soon as the *Duca della città di Penna*, the son of the Moorish slave, was firmly installed as the tyrant of Florence, he joined hands with Pope Clement VII. to advance the interests of the daughter of Lorenzo II., then eleven years old.

When one studies the progress of events and of mankind in that interesting sixteenth century, one must never forget that an inevitable element of politics in those days was a sharp-dealing which destroyed, in every character, that straightforward, upright demeanor which the imagination demands of eminent persons. Therein, above all things, consists Catherine's absolution. This observation disposes of all the trite and foolish accusations made by the writers of the Reformation. That was the most flourishing period of the political system of which the code was written by Machiavelli and by Spinoza, by Hobbes and by Montesquieu, for the dialogue between Sylla and Eucrates contains the gist of Montesquieu's

thought, which his connection with the encyclopædic party did not permit him to develop further.

These principles form to-day the secret moral code of all cabinets in which plans of vast domination are being formed. Here, in France, we blamed Napoléon when he made use of the Italian genius which he had *in cute*, and whose schemes did not always succeed; but Charles V., Catherine, Philip II., and Julius II. would have adopted the same course that he adopted in the Spanish affair. If the history of the period in which Catherine was born should be written with special reference to the probity of the principal characters, it would seem an impossible romance. Charles V., whose duty it was to support Catholicism under the attacks of Luther, who threatened the throne by threatening the tiara, allowed Rome to be besieged, and imprisoned Pope Clement VII. This same Clement VII., who had no more inveterate enemy than Charles V., paid court to him in order that he might establish Alessandro de' Medici in power at Florence, and Charles V. bestowed his daughter's hand upon that bastard. As soon as he was firmly established, Alessandro, acting in concert with Clement, tried to injure Charles V. by forming an alliance with François I., through the medium of Catherine de' Medici, and both of them promised to assist him in reconquering Italy. Lorenzino de' Medici became the companion in debauchery and the willing slave of Duke Alessandro, in order that he might be able to kill him. Filippo Strozzi, one of the great minds of that age, approved so strongly

of that murder that he swore that each of his sons should marry one of the murderer's daughters; and each of his sons religiously executed the father's promise, when, being under Catherine's protection, they might both have made brilliant marriages, for one was the rival of Doria, the other, marshal of France. Cosmo de' Medici, Alessandro's successor, to whom he was entirely unrelated, avenged that tyrant's death in the most cruel fashion, after waiting patiently for twelve years, during which he never abated his hatred of the men who had in reality placed the power in his hands. He was *eighteen years old* when he assumed the sovereignty; his first act was to cause the rights of Alessandro's legitimate sons to be annulled, although he was avenging Alessandro!—Charles V. affirmed the disinherison of his grandson and recognized Cosmo in place of Alessandro's son. Cosmo, who was placed on the throne by Cardinal Cibò, instantly banished him. Whereupon Cardinal Cibò at once accused his own creation, this same Cosmo, who was the first grand duke, of a purpose to poison Alessandro's son. This grand duke, as jealous of his power as Charles V. was of his, followed the emperor's example by abdicating in favor of his son Francesco, after he had caused his other son, Don Garcias, to be put to death to avenge the death of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, whom Garcias had assassinated. Cosmo I. and his son Francesco, who should have been devoted body and soul to the House of France, the only power which could afford

them support, were the slaves of Charles V. and Philip II., and consequently the secret, treacherous, cowardly enemies of Catherine de' Medici, one of the greatest glories of their family. Such are the principal contradictory and illogical exploits, the knaveries, the villainous intrigues of the single House of Medici. From this sketch, one can form some idea of the other princes of Italy and Europe. All the envoys from Cosmo I. to the French court had in their secret instructions an order to poison Strozzi, Catherine's kinsman, if he were there. Charles V. caused three ambassadors of François I. to be assassinated.

It was early in the month of October, 1533, that the *Duca della città di Penna* set out from Florence for Leghorn, accompanied by Catherine de' Medici, the only heiress of Lorenzo II. de' Medici, Duke of Urbino. The duke and the Princess of Florence—such was the title by which the young girl, then fourteen years of age, was known—left the city attended by a considerable body of retainers, officers of the household, and secretaries, preceded by men-at-arms, and followed by an escort of horsemen. The young princess as yet knew nothing of her destiny, beyond the fact that the Pope was to have an interview with Duke Alessandro at Leghorn; but her uncle, Filippo Strozzi, soon revealed to her what the future had in store for her.

Filippo Strozzi had married Clarice de' Medici, half-sister to Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father; but that marriage, arranged with a

view to expediting the recall of the Medici, then in exile, as well as to winning over to their cause one of the stoutest adherents of the popular party, never caused that doughty champion to swerve, although he was persecuted by his party for having concluded it. Despite the apparent changes in his conduct, which was to some slight extent guided by that alliance, he remained faithful to the popular party and declared against the Medici as soon as he divined their purpose of subjecting Florence to their dominion. That great man even declined the offer of a principality which Leo X. made him. Filippo Strozzi was at that moment a victim of the policy of the Medici, always so vacillating in its methods, but always bent upon the same end. After sharing the discomforts of the captivity of Clement VII., when, surprised by the Colonnas, he took refuge in the Castle of San Angelo, he was given up by Clement as a hostage and taken to Naples. As the Pope, as soon as he was free, fell heavily on his enemies, Strozzi nearly lost his life, and was obliged to pay an enormous sum to obtain his release from prison, where he was closely watched. When he found himself at liberty, acting upon the natural inspiration of an honest man, he was foolish enough to present himself before Clement VII., who probably had flattered himself that he was safely rid of him. The Pope had such abundant reason to be ashamed of his conduct toward Strozzi that he received him most ungraciously. Thus Strozzi began very early in life his apprenticeship to the unhappy existence of the

upright man in politics, whose conscience refuses to be governed by the caprice of events, whose acts are satisfactory to virtue alone, and who is persecuted on all sides: by the people, because he resists its blind passions; by the ruling powers, because he resists their usurpations. The lives of such great citizens are a martyrdom in which they are sustained only by the loud voice of conscience and by a heroic sentiment of their duty to society which dictates their conduct in every respect. There were many men of that stamp in the republic of Florence, all as great as Strozzi, and as well equipped as their adversaries of the Medici faction, although they were vanquished by Florentine cunning. What is more worthy of admiration in the Pazzi conspiracy than the conduct of the head of that family, whose commercial interests were enormous, and who settled all his accounts with Asia, the Levant, and Europe before entering upon the execution of that far-reaching design, so that his correspondents would lose nothing, if he should be defeated?

Thus the story of the establishment of the House of Medici in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is one of the most interesting stories which have yet to be written, although divers great geniuses have bent their energies to the task. It is not the history of a republic, or a society, or a particular form of civilization; it is the history of the *politician*, and the old familiar history of politics,—of conquerors and usurpers. Filippo Strozzi, having returned to Florence, re-established the old form of government, and

expelled from the city Ippolito de' Medici, another bastard, and that very Alessandro with whom he was now travelling. He was alarmed by the fickleness of the people; and as he dreaded the vengeance of Clement VII., he went to Lyon to superintend a large mercantile house which he had there, and which corresponded with his own bankers in Venice, Rome, France, and Spain. It is a strange fact that these men, who bore the weight of public affairs and of a constant struggle with the Medici, to say nothing of their dissensions with their own party, also carried the burden of commerce and speculation, of banking and its complications, which latter the extraordinary multiplicity of coins and their counterfeits rendered much more difficult than it is to-day.—The name banker came from the bench—*banc*—on which they sat, and on which they tested their gold and silver pieces.—Filippo found in the death of his wife, whom he adored, a pretext for yielding to the exigencies of the republican party, whose police is the more to be dreaded in all republics because everybody becomes a spy in the name of liberty, which justifies everything. Filippo did not return to Florence until the moment when Florence was compelled to submit to the yoke of Alessandro; but he had been first to see Pope Clement VII., whose affairs were then in such flourishing condition that his disposition toward Filippo underwent a change. At the moment of their triumph, the Medici stood in such need of a man like Strozzi, if for nothing else than to bring about the

accession of Alessandro, that Clement found a way to persuade him to accept a seat at the council-board of the bastard, who was about beginning the coercion of the city, and Filippo accepted a commission as senator. But, for two years and a half, he had detected, like Seneca and Burrhus at the court of Nero, the beginnings of tyranny. He found that he had come to be so distrusted by the people, and such an object of suspicion to the Medici, whose designs he resisted, that he foresaw a catastrophe. And so, as soon as he learned from Duke Alessandro of the projected alliance between Catherine and a son of France, which was probably to be concluded at Leghorn, where the negotiators had appointed to meet, he formed the plan of going to France and attaching himself to the fortunes of his niece, who must have a guardian. Alessandro, overjoyed to be rid of a man so difficult to manage in Florentine affairs, approved this determination, which spared him the necessity of a murder; and he advised Strozzi to place himself at the head of Catherine's household.

The Medici, to dazzle the French court, had provided a brilliant suite for her whom they called very inappropriately the *Princess of Florence*, and who was also called the little Duchess of Urbino. The cortége, at the head of which rode Duke Alessandro, Catherine, and Strozzi, comprised more than a thousand persons, excluding the escort and the servants; and when the rear was passing through the gates of Florence, the head was already beyond the first

village outside the city, to-day given over to the weaving of straw for hats. It was beginning to be rumored among the people that Catherine was to marry a son of François I., but it was still nothing more than a rumor, which assumed definite shape in the eyes of Tuscany by reason of this triumphal progress from Florence to Leghorn. From the preparations which it necessitated, Catherine suspected that her marriage was involved, and her uncle told her of the failure of the plans of her ambitious kinsmen, who had tried to obtain the dauphin's hand for her. Duke Alessandro still hoped that the Duke of Albany would succeed in inducing the King of France to change his mind, for he was desirous to purchase the support of the Medici in Italy, but was unwilling to pay any higher price than the Duc d'Orléans. This ungenerousness caused the loss of Italy to France, and did not prevent Catherine from being queen.

This Duke of Albany, son of Alexander Stuart, brother of James III., King of Scotland, had married Anne de la Tour de Boulogne, sister of Madeleine de la Tour de Boulogne, Catherine's mother; thus he was her maternal uncle. It was through her mother that Catherine was so rich and allied to so many families; for, strangely enough, Diane de Poitiers, her rival, was also her cousin. Jean de Poitiers, Diane's father, was a son of Jeanne de la Tour de Boulogne, the Duchess of Urbino's aunt. Catherine was also connected with Mary Stuart, her daughter-in-law.

Catherine was informed that her marriage-portion in money would be one hundred thousand ducats.

The ducat was a gold piece of the size of one of our old-fashioned louis, but only half as thick. Thus a hundred thousand ducats in those days, allowing for the much greater value of gold, represented about six millions of our present money, the ducat to-day being worth almost twelve francs. We can understand the extensive banking business carried on by Filippo Strozzi's house at Lyon, when we consider that his agent in that city was to provide the twelve hundred thousand livres in gold. The counties of Auvergne and Lauraguais were also to form a part of Catherine's dowry, and Pope Clement presented her with another hundred thousand ducats in jewels, precious stones, and other wedding-gifts, to which Duke Alessandro contributed.

On arriving at Leghorn, Catherine, who was still a mere girl, could not fail to be flattered by the extraordinary magnificence which Pope Clement, her "uncle in Notre-Dame," at that time the head of the House of Medici, displayed in order to humiliate the court of France. He had already arrived in one of his galleys, which was upholstered from stem to stern in crimson satin with gold fringe, and covered with an awning of cloth of goid. This galley, the decorations of which cost more than twenty thousand ducats, had several cabins intended for the promised bride of Henri of France, all furnished with the richest curiosities which the Medici had been able to collect. The rowers, who were magnificently dressed, and the crew, were commanded by a prior of the Order of Knights of Rhodes. The

Pope's household travelled on three other galleys. The galleys of the Duke of Albany, which lay at anchor beside Clement's, formed with them a considerable flotilla.

Duke Alessandro presented the officers of Catherine's household to the Pope, with whom he held a secret conference, at which he probably introduced to His Holiness Count Sebastiano Montecuculli, who had just left, somewhat abruptly, it was said, the service of the emperor, and his two generals, Antonio de Leyva and Ferdinando de Gonzaga. Was there a concerted plan between the two bastards, Giulio and Alessandro, to make the Duc d'Orléans dauphin? What was the reward promised to Count Sebastiano Montecuculli, who, before taking service with Charles V., had studied medicine? History is silent on this subject. Moreover, we shall soon see with what dense clouds the whole transaction is enveloped. The obscurity is so great that sober-minded and conscientious historians have in recent years admitted Montecuculli's innocence.

Catherine now learned officially from the Pope's lips the alliance that was proposed for her. The Duke of Albany had not been able without great difficulty to keep the King of France to his promise of giving even his second son to Catherine. So that Clement's impatience was so great, he was so afraid of finding his plans overturned, either by some intrigue on the emperor's part or by the indifference of France, where the leading men looked with little favor on the proposed marriage, that he set sail at

once for Marseille. He reached that port late in October, 1533. Despite its magnificent display, the House of Medici was eclipsed by the House of France. To show how far those bankers carried their ostentation, it is enough to say that the *douzain* placed by the Pope in the wedding-purse consisted of gold medallions of incalculable historical value, for they were unique at that time. But François I., who loved display and festivities, outdid himself on this occasion. The nuptials of Henri de Valois and Catherine lasted thirty-four days.

It is quite unnecessary to repeat here the details, familiar as household words in all the histories of Provence and Marseille, of the famous interview between the Pope and the King of France, which was signalized by the Duke of Albany's jest concerning the duty of refraining from eating flesh; a comical blunder mentioned by Brantôme, which amused the court hugely, and which shows the moral tone of that period. Although Henri de Valois was but three weeks older than Catherine de' Medici, the Pope insisted that the marriage should be consummated on the very day of its celebration, so fearful was he of the political subterfuges and wiles then in vogue. Clement, determined, as history informs us, to obtain evidence of the consummation of the marriage, remained thirty-four days at Marseille for that express purpose, hoping that his niece would afford him visible proof of the fact; for Catherine was mature at fourteen. In all probability it was while he was questioning the bride

before his departure, that he said to her, to console her, the famous words attributed to her father: *A figlia d'inganno, non manca mai la figliuolanza.*

The strangest conjectures have been entertained concerning Catherine's sterility, which lasted ten years. Few people are aware to-day that there are several medical treatises containing such indecent suppositions relative to that peculiar state of affairs, that they cannot be printed. But the article entitled *Fernel* in Bayle affords a fair idea of the extraordinary slanders heaped upon that queen, whose every act was distorted. Her sterility was due solely to Henri II. It would have been enough to observe that, at a time when no prince was at all embarrassed about having natural children, Diane de Poitiers, to whom he was much more attached than to his lawful wife, had none. There is nothing more common in surgery than Henri's malformation, which is made clear, moreover, by the jest of the ladies at court, who styled him Abbé de Saint-Victor, at a period when the French language enjoyed the same privileges as the Latin. As soon as the prince submitted to the necessary operation, Catherine had eleven pregnancies and ten children. It is fortunate for France that Henri II. delayed as he did. If he had had children by Diane, matters would have been terribly complicated. When the operation was performed, the Duchesse de Valentinois had reached the second girlhood of women. That single fact proves that the history of Catherine de' Medici is still to be written from beginning to end, and that, as

Napoléon very wisely observed, the history of France should be in only one volume or in a thousand.

Pope Clement's sojourn at Marseille, when we compare the conduct of Charles V. with that of the King of France, demonstrates the king's vast superiority to the emperor, in that respect as in every other, by the way. We quote a succinct account of the interview, given by a contemporary:

"His Holiness the Pope, having been escorted to the palace, which, as I have said, had been prepared for him on the other side of the harbor, one and all withdrew to their quarters until the following day, which His Holiness had assigned for his entry, which was made with great sumptuosity and magnificence, he being seated in a chair borne on the shoulders of two men, and in his pontifical garments, save only the tiara; before him went a white palfrey whereon lay the sacrament of the altar, the said palfrey being driven by two men on foot, in very handsome livery, with reins of white silk. Then came all the cardinals in their robes, mounted on their *pontifical mules*, and Madame the Duchess of Urbino in great splendor, attended by a great number of lords and ladies, both French and Italians. The Holy Father, thus escorted, having reached the place prepared for his lodging, everyone withdrew; and all this was arranged and carried out without any confusion or disturbance. Now, while the Pope was making his entry, the king entered the harbor in a frigate, and took up his abode in the place from

which the Pope had set out, in order to go from that place on the morrow to make his obeisance to the Holy Father as most Christian king.

"The king, being fully prepared, set out for the palace where the Pope was, attended by the princes of his blood, Monseigneur le Duc de Vendosmois, —father of the Vidame de Chartres,—the Comte de Sainct-Pol, Messieurs de Montpensier and de la Roche-sur-Yon, the Duc de Nemours, brother of the Duc de Savoie, who died at that place; the Duke of Albany and several others, counts, barons, and lords, the Seigneur de Montmorency, the king's grand master, riding always beside him. The king, having arrived at the palace, was received very kindly by the Pope and the whole college of cardinals, *assembled in consistory*. That done, everyone retired to the place assigned to him, and the king took several cardinals away with him to entertain them, among others Cardinal de' Medici, the Pope's nephew, a man of great magnificence and well attended. On the morrow the persons summoned by His Holiness and the king began to assemble to treat of those matters which the interview was held to decide. First was discussed the matter of faith, and a bull was promulgated to put down heresy, and to prevent the flame from becoming fiercer than it already was. Then was concluded the marriage of the Duc d'Orléans, second son of the king, to Catherine de' Medici, Duchess of Urbino, niece to His Holiness, with the same or similar conditions to those formerly proposed to the

Duke of Albany. The said marriage was consummated with great pomp, and our Holy Father married them. The marriage thus consummated, the Holy Father held a consistory, at which he created four cardinals of the king's nomination, namely: Cardinal Le Veneur, formerly Bishop of Lisieux, and grand almoner; Cardinal de Boulogne, of the family of La Chambre, half-brother to the Duke of Albany; Cardinal de Châtillon, of the family of Coligny, nephew to the Sire de Montmorency, and Cardinal de Givry."

When Strozzi delivered the dowry in presence of the court, he observed some signs of astonishment among the French nobles: they said openly that it was a mere trifle for a mésalliance—what would they have said to-day? Thereupon Cardinal Ippolito replied:

"It seems that you are not admitted to your king's secrets. His Holiness binds himself to give France three pearls of inestimable value: Genoa, Milan, and Naples."

The Pope allowed Count Sebastiano Montecuculli to present himself at the French court, where he offered his services, complaining bitterly of Antonio de Leyva and Ferdinando de Gonzaga; these complaints led to his services being accepted. Montecuculli did not belong to Catherine's household, which was made up entirely of Frenchmen and Frenchwomen; for, in compliance with a law of the realm, the execution of which was witnessed by

the Pope with the greatest pleasure, Catherine was naturalized by letters patent prior to the marriage. Montecuculli was attached at first to the household of the queen, Charles V.'s sister. In a short time he entered the service of the dauphin as cup-bearer.

The Duchesse d'Orléans found that she was utterly lost to sight at the French court. Her young husband was in love with Diane de Poitiers, who certainly was a fair rival of Catherine so far as birth was concerned, and was of far greater consequence than she. The daughter of the Medici was compelled to yield precedence to Queen Eleanor, sister of Charles V., and to the Duchesse d'Etampes, whose marriage to the head of the family of Brosse made her one of the most powerful women in France and bearer of one of the most venerable titles. Her aunt, the Duchess of Albany, the Queen of Navarre, the Duchesse de Guise, the Duchesse de Vendôme, the Constable's wife, and several other women of equal eminence, by their birth and privileges, as well as by their power at the most magnificent court that ever surrounded a king of France, not excepting Louis XIV., overshadowed the daughter of Florentine tradesmen, who was wealthier and more illustrious through her mother's family of La Tour de Boulogne than through the family of Medici.

His niece's position was so unpleasant and so difficult that the republican Filippo Strozzi, who was quite incapable of guiding her amid so many conflicting interests, left her after the first year; in fact, he was summoned back to Italy by the death of

Clement VII. Catherine's conduct, if we remember that she was barely fifteen years old, was a model of circumspection. She attached herself closely to the king, her father-in-law, and left his side as little as possible; she followed him in the saddle, on his hunting-parties, and to the field of battle. Her idolatrous affection for François I. averted all suspicion from the Medici when the dauphin was poisoned. At that time, Catherine and the Duc d'Orléans were at the king's headquarters in Provence, for France was invaded soon after the marriage by Charles V., the king's brother-in-law. The whole court remained at the scene of the wedding festivities, transformed into the scene of one of the bloodiest of wars.

When Charles V. was in full retreat, leaving the bones of his army in Provence, the dauphin was returning to Lyon along the Rhône; he halted for the night at Tournon, and by way of pastime indulged in some of the violent exercises which formed the major part of his brother's education and his own, as a result of their captivity as hostages. The prince being very warm,—it was in August,—was imprudent enough to ask for a glass of water, which Montecuculli handed him iced. The dauphin died almost instantly. François I. adored his son, who was, according to all historians, an accomplished prince. The father, in his despair, caused the prosecution of Montecuculli to be conducted with the greatest publicity, and entrusted it to the most learned magistrates of the time. After submitting

to the first tortures, like a hero, without confessing anything, the count made disclosures wherein he implicated the emperor and his two generals, Antonio de Leyva and Ferdinando de Gonzaga. François I. was not satisfied with the result of the prosecution. No cause was ever more solemnly discussed than this. This is what the king did, according to the narrative of an eye-witness:

"The king summoned to Lyon all the princes of his blood, all the chevaliers of his order, and other great personages of his kingdom: the papal legate and nuncio, the cardinals who were present at his court, also the ambassadors of England, Scotland, Portugal, Venice, Ferrara, and others; also all the princes and great foreign lords, Italian and German, who were resident in his court at that time, as the Duke of Wittemberg, German; the Dukes of Somme, Ariano, and Atri; the Prince of Melfi—who wanted to marry Catherine—and the Prince of Stigliano, Neapolitans; Signor Don Ippolito d'Este; the Marquis of Vigevano of the Trivulzio family, Milanese; Signor Gian Paulo de Cere, Roman; Signor Cesare Fregoso, Genoese; Signor Annibal de Gonzaga, Mantuan, and a great number of others, who having assembled, he caused to be read in their presence, from beginning to end, the proceedings against the *unhappy man* who had poisoned the late monseigneur le dauphin, with the interrogatories, confessions, confrontations, and other solemnities usual in criminal trials, not wishing that sentence should be executed until all those present

should have given their opinion touching that appalling and horrible case."

The fidelity, the self-sacrificing devotion, and the adroitness of Count Montecuculli may well appear extraordinary in an age of general indiscretion, when all, even ministers of State, chatter about the most minute events which have come under their notice; but in those days princes were fortunate in finding devoted retainers, or knew how to select them. In those days there were monarchical Moreys because there was faith. Never ask any great sacrifice from those whose attachment is based upon self-interest, because interests may change; but expect everything from earnest sentiments, from religious faith, from monarchical faith, from patriotic faith. These three varieties of faith alone produce the Berthereaus of Geneva, the Sydneys and Straffords of England, the assassins of Thomas à-Becket as well as the Montecucullis, the Jacques Cœurs and Jeanne d'Arcs as well as the Richelieus and Dantons, the Bonchamps and Talmonts, and the Clements, Chabots, etc. Charles V. made use of the most exalted personages in the assassination of the three ambassadors of François I. A year later, Lorenzino, Catherine's cousin-german, assassinated Duke Alessandro after a dissimulation of three years, and under circumstances which have caused him to be called the Florentine Brutus. The rank of the individuals involved imposed so little restraint on such enterprises, that the death of Leo X. and of Clement VII.

as well, were supposed not to be due to natural causes. Mariana, the historian of Philip II., almost perpetrates a joke in recording the death of the Queen of Spain, a princess of France. He says that, "for the glory of the throne of Spain, God ordained the blindness of the physicians, who treated the queen for dropsy."—She was enceinte.—When Henri II. indulged in a calumny which deserved a sword-thrust, he found La Châtaigneraie to receive it. In those days, the repasts of princes and princesses were served in boxes fastened with padlocks—*cadenas*—of which they kept the keys. Hence the *droit de cadenas*, an honor which became extinct under Louis XIV.

The dauphin died by poison, in the same way, perhaps by the same poison, that killed MADAME under Louis XIV. Pope Clement VII. had been dead two years; Duke Alessandro, plunged in debauchery, seemed to have no possible interest in the elevation of the Duc d'Orléans. Catherine, then seventeen, and overflowing with affection for her father-in-law, was with him at the time of the catastrophe; Charles V. alone seemed to have an interest in that death, for François I. had in view for his son an alliance which would exalt the power of France. The count's confessions, therefore, were very adroitly made to rest upon the passions and policies of the moment. Charles V. retreated after he had seen his armies buried in Provence with his good-fortune, his reputation, and his hopes of domination. Observe that if the torture had wrung a confession from an innocent man, François I. afterward

gave him full liberty to speak in the presence of an imposing assemblage made up of men before whom innocence had some chance of triumphing. The king, who wished to know the truth, sought in good faith to discover it.

Notwithstanding her brilliant prospects, Catherine's position at court did not change with the dauphin's death; her sterility made people anticipate a divorce in case her husband should succeed to the throne. The new dauphin was under the charm of Diane de Poitiers. Diane dared to set herself up as a rival to Madame d'Etampes. Wherefore, Catherine redoubled her attentions and cajoleries with her father-in-law, realizing that she could look nowhere else for support. The first ten years of Catherine's married life were embittered by the repeated disappointments due to the constant crushing of her hopes of maternity and to her wearisome rivalry with Diane. Imagine the life of a princess spied upon by a jealous mistress who is supported by an immense party, the Catholic party, and by two such alliances as the sénéchale made in marrying her daughters, one to Robert de la Mark, Duc de Bouillon and Prince de Sedan, the other to Claude de Lorraine, Duc d'Aumale.

Catherine, lost between the party of the Duchesse d'Etampes and that of the sénéchale,—such was Diane's title during the reign of François I.,—tried to be the friend of the Duchesse d'Etampes and the friend of Diane de Poitiers at the same time, the court being divided between those two mortal enemies.

She who was destined to be so great a queen played the part of a servant. Thus she served her apprenticeship in that two-faced policy which was the secret of her life. The *queen* found herself later between Catholics and Calvinists, as the *woman* had been for ten years between Madame d'Etampes and Madame de Poitiers. She studied the contradictory course of French politics: François I. supported Calvin and the Lutherans to embarrass Charles V. Then, after he had secretly and patiently protected the Reformation in Germany, after he had winked at Calvin's residence at the court of Navarre, he descended upon the reformers with unmeasured severity. Thus Catherine saw that court and the women of that court playing with the fire of heresy, and Diane at the head of the Catholic party with the Guises, solely because the Duchesse d'Etampes upheld Calvin and the Protestants.

Such was the political training of that queen, who observed in the cabinet of the King of France the devious dealings characteristic of the House of Medici. The dauphin thwarted his father in everything; he was a bad son. He forgot the most cruel, but the truest maxim of royalty, namely: that thrones are mutually bound for one another, and that the son, who may be in opposition during his father's lifetime, is in duty bound to adopt his policies on ascending the throne. Spinoza, who was a no less profound politician than a great philosopher, has said, in reference to the case of one king succeeding another as the result of insurrection or assassination: "If the new

king wishes to assure his seat on the throne and to protect his life, he must show so much zeal in avenging his predecessor's death that no one will be tempted to commit a similar crime. But, to avenge him *worthily*, it is not enough to shed the blood of his subjects, he must also adopt the policy of him whose place he has taken, and follow the same course in the government of his realm."—It was the application of this maxim which gave Florence to the Medici. Cosmo I., the successor of Duke Alessandro, procured the assassination of the Florentine Brutus at Venice, after eleven years, and, as we have said heretofore, persecuted the Strozzi without respite. It was neglect of this maxim which destroyed Louis XVI. That king was false to all principles of government when he rehabilitated the parliaments, which his grandfather suppressed. Louis XV.'s judgment was sound. The parliaments, notably that of Paris, were largely responsible for the troubles which necessitated the convocation of the States-General. The mistake that Louis XV. made was in removing the barrier that separated the throne from the people, and in not substituting a stronger one,—in a word, in not replacing the parliaments by strong provincial governments. Therein lay the remedy for the evils of monarchy,—the voting of imposts, their adjustment, and a gradual approval of the necessary reforms in the monarchical régime.

The first act of Henri II. was to give his confidence to the Constable de Montmorency, whom his father

had urged him to leave in disgrace. The constable was, conjointly with Diane de Poitiers, with whom he was closely allied, master of the realm. Thus, Catherine was even less powerful and less happy when she became Queen of France than when she was dauphiness. In the first place, beginning with 1543, she had a child every year for ten years, and was engrossed by the duties of maternity throughout that period, which includes the last years of François I. and almost the whole reign of Henri II. It is impossible not to see, in that constant procreation, the influence of a rival who selected that method of ridding herself of the lawful wife. That barbarous expedient of a female politician was probably one of Catherine's principal grievances against Diane. Being thus kept aloof from affairs of State, that superior woman passed her time in noting the interests of all the people at court, and of all the factions which were constantly forming there. All the Italians who had come to France with her were objects of violent distrust. After the execution of Montecuculli, the Constable de Montmorency, Diane, and most of the shrewd politicians of the court were assailed by suspicions of the Medici; but François I. always refused to listen to them. But the Gondi, the Biragues, the Strozzi, the Ruggieri, the Sardini, in a word, all those who were called "the Italians," who had come to France in Catherine's suite, were required to put forth all their resources in the way of shrewd wit, political cunning, and courage, to maintain their footing at

court under the burden of disfavor which weighed upon them.

During the reign of Diane de Poitiers, Catherine's affability toward the favorite went so far that clever persons would have seen therein evidence of that profound dissimulation which men, events, and the conduct of Henri II. compelled Catherine to display. They have gone too far who have maintained that she never asserted her rights either as wife or as queen. In the first place, the sentiment of dignity, which Catherine possessed in the highest degree, forbade her to claim what historians call the rights of a wife. Catherine's eleven confinements and ten children sufficiently explain the conduct of Henri, who was left free by his wife's constant pregnancy to pass his time with Diane de Poitiers. But the king certainly fell short in no respect of what he owed himself; he provided for the queen an *entrée* worthy to be ranked with all those which had hitherto taken place, for her coronation as queen. The records of the Parliament and of the Cour des Comptes indicate that both those great bodies went out of Paris as far as Saint-Lazare to meet the queen. We quote also an extract from the narrative of Du Tillet:

"At Saint-Lazare a platform had been erected, on which was a throne"—which Du Tillet calls a *chaire de parement*.—"Catherine took her place thereon, clad in a *surcot*, or sort of mantle of ermine, covered with precious stones, a bodice underneath with the

royal cape, and on her head a crown studded with pearls and diamonds; she was supported by the Maréchale de la Mark, her maid of honor. Around her, *standing*, were the princes of the blood and other princes and noblemen richly dressed, with the Chancellor of France, dressed in a robe of cloth of gold, with figures on a red *cramoisi** background. In front of the queen, on the same platform, were seated in two rows twelve duchesses or countesses, dressed in ermine *surcots*, bodices, cloaks, and circlets, that is to say, duchess's or countess's coronets. They were the Duchesses d'Estouteville, de Montpensier, elder and younger, the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon; the Duchesses de Guise, de Nivernois, d'Aumale, de Valentinois—Diane de Poitiers;—Mademoiselle la bâtarde légitimée de France—the title of the king's daughter, Diane, who was Duchesse de Castro-Farnèse, and afterward Duchesse de Montmorency-Damville,—Madame la Connétable and Mademoiselle de Nemours, with divers other noble damsels for whom there were no seats. The four presidents *à mortier*, some other members of the Parliament, and Du Tillet the clerk ascended the platform and made their reverences, whereupon the first president, Lizet, kneeling on one knee, addressed the queen. The chancellor, with one knee on the ground, replied. She entered the city in an open litter, about three o'clock in the afternoon, having Madame Marguerite de France opposite her, and

* The word *cramoisi*—crimson—did not denote color simply, it also expressed the perfection of the coloring.—*See* Rabelais.

riding beside her open litter, Cardinals d'Amboise, de Châtillon, de Boulogne, and de Lenoncourt in their rochets. She alighted at Notre-Dame and was received there by the clergy. After she had performed her devotions, she was escorted through Rue de la Calandre to the Palace, where the royal supper was prepared in the great banqueting-hall. She sat at the centre of the marble table, under a velvet canopy studded with gold fleurs-de-lis."

This is a fitting place to demolish one of those erroneous popular ideas which some persons have held, following the lead of Sauval. It is alleged that Henri II. carried his disregard of the proprieties so far as to put his mistress's cipher on the monuments which, by Catherine's advice, he began or continued on such a magnificent scale. But the double cipher which can be seen at the Louvre gives the lie every day to those who are so short-sighted as to repeat the absurd stories which unjustly dishonor the memories of our kings and queens. The H of Henri, and the two C's of Catherine, back to back, seem to form two D's for Diane. The coincidence may well have been gratifying to Henri II., but it is true, none the less, that the royal cipher is actually made up of the king's initial and the queen's. Indeed, the same cipher may still be seen on the column of the Wheat Market, which was built by Catherine alone. The cipher may also be seen in the vaults of Saint-Denis, on the tomb which Catherine caused to be erected in her lifetime, beside that of Henri II., and

on which she is represented, carved from life by the sculptor for whom she posed.

On a solemn occasion, when he started on his expedition to Germany, Henri II. declared Catherine regent during his absence, as well as in case of his death; it was on March 25, 1552. Catherine's bitterest enemy, the author of the *Discourse concerning the Marvellous Conduct of Catherine II.*, agrees that she acquitted herself of her duties as regent in such a way as to win universal praise, and that the king was satisfied with her administration. Henri II. received men and money when they were needed. And, after the fatal day of Saint-Quentin, Catherine obtained a considerable sum from the Parisians, which she sent to Compiègne, where the king then was.

In politics, Catherine made extraordinary efforts to obtain a little influence. She was clever enough to enlist the constable, who was all-powerful under Henri II., in her interest. Everyone knows the crushing reply which the king made when annoyed by Montmorency. That reply was the result of the sound advice given by Catherine in the few moments when she was alone with the king, and when she described to him the Florentine policy, which was to set the great men of the realm against one another, and to establish the royal authority upon their ruins—the system of Louis XI., continued by her and by Richelieu. Henri II., who saw only through the eyes of Diane and the constable, was a typical feudal king, and friendly to the great families of his kingdom.

After the futile attempt made by the constable in her favor, which belongs to the year 1556, Catherine made pronounced advances to the Guises and formed the plan of detaching them from Diane's party in order to oppose them to the constable. But, unluckily, Diane and the constable were quite as bitter against the Protestants as the Guises themselves. So that the conflict between them lacked that intense animosity which the religious question would have inspired. Moreover, Diane openly thwarted the queen's plans by coquetting with the Guises and giving her daughter to the Duc d'Aumale. She went so far that some authors claim that she accorded more than her good graces to the amorous Cardinal de Lorraine. The satirists of the time evolved the following quatrain on Henry II.:

> "Sire, si vous laissez, comme Charles* désire,
> Comme Diane veut, par trop vous gouverner,
> Fondre, petrir, mollir, refondre, retourner,
> Sire, vous n'êtes plus, vous n'êtes plus que cire."†

It is impossible to regard Catherine's ostentatious grief and regret at the death of Henri II. as sincere. The very fact that the king was bound by an unalterable passion to Diane de Poitiers required Catherine to play the part of a neglected wife who adores her husband; but, like all women of brains,

* The Cardinal de Lorraine.

† "An, Sire, you should allow, and plain 'tis Charles' desire,
No less than Diane's aim, your will to be fast bound,
And shaped, reshaped, and kneaded o'er, and twisted round,
Then Sire, you're but—aye, naught but pliant wax then, Sire."

she persisted in her dissimulation and never failed to speak affectionately of Henri II. As is well known, Diane wore mourning all her life for her husband, Monsieur de Brézé. Her colors were black and white, and the king wore them at the tourney at which he was killed. Catherine, doubtless in imitation of her rival, wore mourning all her life for Henri II. She treated Diane de Poitiers with a refinement of perfidy to which historians have paid no attention. After the king's death, the Duchesse de Valentinois fell into utter disgrace and was abandoned in the most dastardly fashion by the constable, a man altogether inferior to his reputation. Diane offered the queen her estate and château of Chenonceaux. Whereupon Catherine said, in the presence of witnesses: "I cannot forget that she made my dear Henri happy; I am ashamed to accept Chenonceaux without giving another estate in exchange, and I suggest Chaumont-sur-Loire."—The papers confirming the exchange were passed at Blois in 1559. Diane, whose daughters were married to the Duc d'Aumale and the Duc de Bouillon, then a sovereign prince, retained her whole fortune and died peacefully, in 1566, at the age of sixty-six. She was, therefore, nineteen years older than Henri II. These dates, taken from the epitaph which the historian who wrote about her toward the end of the last century copied from her tomb, throw light upon many historical difficulties; for some historians asserted that she was forty, others sixteen, at the time of her father's sentence in 1523. She was then

twenty-four years old. After having read everything, for and against her conduct toward François I., at the moment when the family of Poitiers was in such dire peril, we do not feel justified in reaffirming or contradicting anything. It is one of those episodes which must remain obscure. We can see, by what takes place in our own days, that facts are perverted the instant they occur.

Catherine, who based great hopes on her rival's age, had tried several times to destroy her power. It was a horrible, underground struggle. One day, Catherine was on the point of realizing her hopes. In 1554, Madame Diane, being indisposed, urged the king to go to Saint-Germain while she was getting better. That haughty coquette did not choose to be seen surrounded by the appliances required by the physicians, and without the prestige of fine raiment. Catherine organized for the king's reception on his return a magnificent ballet performance, in the course of which six young women recited a piece of poetry. She chose for the six young women, Miss Fleming, a kinswoman of her uncle the Duke of Albany, the loveliest creature imaginable, a perfect blonde; Clarice Strozzi, a relative of her own, a magnificent Italian beauty with superb black hair and wonderfully beautiful hands; Mademoiselle Lewiston, maid of honor to Mary Stuart; Mary Stuart herself; Madame Elisabeth of France, the ill-fated Queen of Spain, and Madame Claude. Elisabeth was nine years old, Claude eight, Mary Stuart twelve. The queen evidently intended to give prominence to Clarice

Strozzi and Miss Fleming and to offer them without rivals to the king's favor. The king did not resist; he fell in love with Miss Fleming, he had by her a natural child, Henri de Valois, Comte d'Angoulême, Grand Prior of France. But Diane's credit and influence were not shaken. Like Madame de Pompadour, at a later period, the Duchesse de Valentinois forgave. But what sort of love on Catherine's part did that manœuvre indicate,—love of power, or love of her husband? The ladies may decide the question.

We hear a great deal to-day of the license of the press; but it is difficult to imagine how far it was carried in the early days of printing. In the first place, we know that Aretino, the Voltaire of his time, made kings tremble on their thrones, Charles V. first of all. But it may not be so generally known how far pamphleteers carried their audacity. The château of Chenonceaux was given to Diane—no, not given, she was begged to accept it—to help her to forget one of the most outrageous publications which was ever issued against a woman, and which shows the relentless fierceness of the war between her and Madame d'Etampes. In 1537, when she was thirty-eight years old, a poet of Champagne, named Jean Voûté, published a collection of Latin poems containing three epigrams aimed at her. We can but believe that the poet was assured of protection in high places, for his collection is prefaced by a eulogy of himself written by Salmon Macrin, the king's first *valet de chambre*. Of these epigrams, which were entitled IN PICTAVIAM, ANUM AULICAM,

AGAINST LA POITIERS, AN OLD FEMALE COURTIER, —the following is the only passage fit to be quoted to-day:

"Non trahit esca ficta prædam."

"A painted bait attracts no game," says the poet, after alleging that she painted her face, and purchased her teeth and her hair. "And even though you purchase," he adds, "the cream of everything that makes a woman, you will not obtain what you desire from your lover, for to do that one must be alive, and you are dead."

This collection, printed by Simon de Colines, was dedicated TO A BISHOP!—to François Bohier, the brother of the man who, to save his credit at court and atone for his crime, offered Henri II., on his accession, the château of Chenonceaux, built by his father, Thomas Bohier, Councillor of State under four kings: Louis XI., Charles VIII., Louis XII., and François I. What were the pamphlets published against Madame de Pompadour and Marie-Antoinette, compared to verses which one would say were written by Martial! This Voûté must have come to a bad end. Thus the estate and château of Chenonceaux cost Diane nothing more than forgiveness of an insult, which the Gospel enjoins! As they were not assessed by a jury, the penalties inflicted on the press were somewhat more severe than those of to-day.

The queens of France, when widowed, are supposed to remain in the king's apartment for forty

days, without other light than that of the tapers; they do not come forth until after the interment. This inviolable custom was exceedingly distasteful to Catherine, who feared intrigues: she found a way to evade it. It was this. Early one morning, as the Cardinal de Lorraine—at such a crisis!—was leaving the house of La Belle Romaine, a famous courtesan of the time of Henri II., who lived on Rue Culture Saint-Catherine, he was roughly handled by a party of libertines. "Whereat His Eminence, being greatly astonished," says Henri Estienne, "declared that the heretics were lying in wait for him."—And, upon that pretext, the court went from Paris to Saint-Germain. The queen did not choose to be separated from the king, her son, and betook herself thither.

The accession of François II., to which Catherine had looked forward as the time when the reins of power would fall into her hands, was a moment of disappointment which came as a cruel climax to the twenty-six years of chagrin she had already passed at the French court. The Guises at once seized upon the government with incredible presumption: the Duc de Guise was placed at the head of the army, the constable was disgraced, the cardinal managed the finances and the clergy.

Catherine began her political career by one of those dramas which, although it made less noise than some others, was none the less horrible, and accustomed her, doubtless, to the terrible emotions of her life. While seeming to be in accord with the

Guises, she tried to assure her triumph by gaining the support of the House of Bourbon. Whether it was that Catherine, after having vainly attempted the most violent methods, had determined to resort to jealousy to bring the king to her feet, or whether it seemed to her a cruel fate to attain her second girlhood without having known genuine love, she displayed the liveliest interest in a nobleman of the royal blood, François de Vendôme, son of Louis de Vendôme—of the family from which the Bourbons sprung—and Vidame de Chartres, the latter being the name by which he is known in history. Catherine's secret hatred of Diane was revealed in many circumstances to which historians, engrossed by political affairs, have paid no attention. Catherine's attachment to the vidame originated in an affront which that young man put upon the favorite. Diane desired the most honorable alliances for her daughters, who, moreover, were descended from the oldest nobility of the realm. She was especially ambitious of the honor of a marriage with the House of France: a proffer of the hand of her second daughter, who afterward became Duchesse d'Aumale, was made in her behalf to the vidame, whom François I. had very prudently kept in an impoverished condition. In fact, when the Vidame de Chartres and the Prince de Condé came to court, François gave them—what?—appointments as chamberlains-in-ordinary, with an allowance of twelve hundred crowns, which were commonly allotted to simple gentlemen. Although Diane de

Poitiers offered immense wealth, some valuable office under the crown, and the king's favor, the vidame declined. And then this Bourbon, who had already shown a factious spirit, married Jeanne, daughter of the Baron d'Estissac, by whom he had no children. This exhibition of pride naturally commended the vidame to Catherine, who received him with marked favor, and made of him a devoted friend. Historians have compared the last Duc de Montmorency, who was beheaded at Toulouse, to the Vidame of Chartres, in the art of pleasing, in merit, and in talent. Henri II. gave no sign of jealousy; apparently he did not dream that a queen of France could forget what she owed to herself, or that a Medici could forget the honor a Valois had done her. When the queen was said to be flirting with the Vidame de Chartres, she had been almost abandoned by the king since the birth of her last child. Thus her efforts served no purpose, for Henri died wearing the colors of Diane de Poitiers.

At the king's death, Catherine found herself involved in a liaison with the vidame, a situation which was nothing if not in conformity with the morals of the time, when love was at once so chivalrous and so licentious, that the noblest actions were as natural to it as the most blameworthy; but the historians, as usual, have committed the error of taking the exception for the general rule. The four sons of Henri II. crushed the prospects of the Bourbons, all of whom were exceedingly poor, and overwhelmed by the contempt which the constable's

treachery had brought upon them, notwithstanding the reasons which compelled him to leave the kingdom. The Vidame de Chartres, who was to the first Prince de Condé what Richelieu was to Mazarin, his father in politics, his model, and, furthermore, his master in the art of love, concealed the overweening ambition of his family beneath a frivolous exterior. As he was in no position to contend with the Guises, the Montmorencys, the princes of Scotland, the cardinals, and the Bouillons, he was content to distinguish himself by his charming manners and by his wit, which won for him the favors of the loveliest women, and the hearts of some of whom he never thought. He was a privileged man, whose fascination was irresistible, and who was indebted to love for the means of maintaining his rank. The Bourbons would not have lost their tempers like Jarnac at La Châtaigneraie's slander; they gladly accepted estates and châteaux from their mistresses; witness the Prince de Condé, who accepted the estate of Saint-Valery from Madame la Maréchale de Saint-André.

At the death of Henri II., and during the first three weeks of mourning, the vidame's position suddenly changed. Being the object of the queen-mother's inclinations, and paying court to her with the utmost secrecy, as one could do in the case of the queen, he seemed destined to play an important rôle, and Catherine did, in fact, determine to make use of him. He received from her letters for the Prince de Condé, wherein she pointed out the necessity of an alliance

IN CATHERINE'S CHAMBER

The Guises, being informed of this intrigue, turned their way into the queen's chamber to extort from her a revocation to consign the widow to the Bastille, and to have reduced to the direct necessity of begging.

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IN CATHERINE'S CHAMBER

The Guises, being informed of this intrigue, forced their way into the queen's chamber to extort from her an order to assign the widame to the Bastile, and Catherine was reduced to the dire necessity of complying.

IV. CATHERINE'S CHAMBER

The Guises, being informed of this intrigue, forced their way into the queen's chamber to extort from her an order to consign the rebellious to the Bastille, and Catherine was reduced to the dire necessity of complying.



against the Guises. The Guises, being informed of this intrigue, forced their way into the queen's chamber to extort from her an order to consign the vidame to the Bastille, and Catherine was reduced to the dire necessity of complying. The vidame died, after a few months of captivity, on the day that he was released from prison, a short time before the conspiracy of Amboise. Such was the end of Catherine de' Medici's first and only love-affair. Protestant writers have said that the queen had the vidame poisoned in order to consign to the tomb the secret of her amours!

Such was that woman's apprenticeship in royal power.

PART FIRST

THE CALVINIST MARTYR

*

Few persons know to-day how plain were the dwellings of the bourgeois of Paris in the fourteenth century, and how simple was their life. Perhaps this very simplicity in action and in thought was the cause of the grandeur of that old bourgeoisie, which was most assuredly great and noble and free—more so, it may be, than the bourgeoisie of to-day; its history is still to be written, it demands and awaits a man of genius. This reflection, inspired by the little-known episode which forms the groundwork of this Study, and which will always be one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of the bourgeoisie, will doubtless come to every mind after reading this narrative. Is this the first time in history that the conclusion ever preceded the facts?

In 1560, the houses on Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie lined the left bank of the Seine between Pont Notre-Dame and Pont au Change. The public way and the houses took up the space occupied simply by the roadway of the present quay. Every house was situated directly over the Seine, so that the occupants could go down to the river by staircases of

stone or wood, protected by stout iron gratings, or wooden gates studded with nails. These houses, like the houses in Venice, had one door on land and one water-door. At the moment when this Study is published, there exists but one house of this sort, which can remind us of Paris as it used to be, and that one will soon disappear; it stands at the corner of the Petit-Pont, opposite the guard-house of the Hôtel-Dieu. Formerly, every house presented on the river side the curious aspect due to the trade of its occupant and his habits, or to the original character of the structures invented by the proprietors to use or abuse the Seine. As almost all the bridges were crowded with more mills than the necessities of navigation could allow, the Seine numbered as many mill-ponds as bridges within the city limits. Some of the mill-ponds of that old Paris would have afforded unique tints for the painter's brush. What a forest was formed by the interlaced timbers which supported the mills, their huge floodgates and their wheels! What curious effects were produced by the piles employed to enable the building to encroach on the river! Unfortunately, *genre* painting did not exist at that time, and engraving was in its infancy; so that we are deprived of that curious spectacle, which is still presented on a very small scale by certain towns in the provinces, where the rivers are indented by wooden houses, and where, as at Vendôme, the mill-ponds, full of long grass, are divided by long fences corresponding with the divisional lines of the estates on the two banks.

The name of this street, now stricken from the map, is sufficiently indicative of the trade that was carried on there. In those days, the merchants who followed the same trade, instead of scattering through the city, gathered in one neighborhood and thus afforded one another mutual protection. United socially by the guild which limited their number, they were also joined in brotherhood by the Church. Thus prices were maintained. The masters were not the slaves of their workmen, and did not obey their slightest caprices, as they do to-day; on the contrary, they took care of them, they made them their children, and instructed them in the niceties of their work. In order to become a master, a workman must produce one masterpiece, which was always offered to the patron saint of the guild. Will you whose admiration for the works of the old masters has created the new trade of dealers in bric-a-brac—will you dare to say that the lack of competition weakened the sentiment of perfection and interfered with the beauty of the products of the craftsmen?

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the furrier's trade was one of the most flourishing industries. The difficulty of obtaining furs, which, being brought from the far North, required long and perilous voyages, imparted an excessive value to the products of the industry. Then, as now, the high price spurred on consumption, for vanity knows no obstacles. In France and in other kingdoms, not only were there ordinances reserving to the nobility

the right to wear furs,—a fact attested by the prominent part played by ermine in the old blazonry,—but certain rare furs, like the *vair*, which beyond doubt was the imperial sable, could be worn only by kings, by dukes, and by noblemen invested with certain high offices. There was a distinction between the *grand* vair and the *menu* vair. This word has gone out of use so entirely in the last hundred years, that in an endless number of editions of Perrault's *Contes*, Cinderella's famous slipper, which was probably of *menu vair*, is said to have been of *verre*—glass. Recently, one of our most distinguished poets was obliged to re-establish the proper orthography of this word for the edification of his confrères the writers of feuilletons, apropos of *La Cenerentola*, wherein the symbolic slipper is replaced by a ring, which has no significance.

Naturally, the orders concerning the wearing of furs were continually infringed, to the great satisfaction of the furriers. The high price of cloths and of furs made a garment a durable article, a fitting companion to the furniture, the armor, and the other details of the sturdy life of the fifteenth century. All noblemen, all noblewomen, all persons of wealth, like every bourgeois, possessed at most two garments for each season, which lasted all their lives and more. These garments were bequeathed to their children. So that the clause relating to arms and clothing in marriage-contracts, to-day almost useless because of the trifling value of wardrobes constantly renewed, was in those days of very

great importance. High prices had resulted in durability. A woman's wardrobe constituted a large capital, which was always counted in inventories of household effects, and was packed in those immense chests which threaten disaster to the ceilings of our modern apartments. The full dress of a woman in 1840 would have been the *déshabillé* of a great lady of 1540. To-day, the discovery of America, the facility of transportation, the demolition of social distinctions which has paved the way for the demolition of apparent distinctions,—all have combined to reduce the fur trade to its present condition, to almost nothing. The article which a furrier sells to-day, as formerly, for twenty livres—francs—has followed the decline in the value of money; formerly the livre was worth more than twenty francs of our present money. The petty bourgeoise or the courtesan, who has fur trimming on her cloak to-day, has no idea that in 1440 an ill-humored policeman would have arrested her incontinently and haled her before the magistrate at the Châtelet. The Englishwomen, who are so wild over ermine, do not know that in old times only queens, duchesses, and chancellors of France could wear that royal fur. There exist to-day several noble families whose real name is Pelletier or Lepelletier—Furrier—and who evidently owe their origin to some wealthy fur house, for the majority of bourgeois names began by being sobriquets.

This digression will explain not only the endless quarrels during two centuries concerning precedence

between the guild of drapers and the guild of furriers and mercers,—each of them insisted on marching first as being the most important guild in Paris,—but also the influential position of Sieur Lecamus, furrier, honored with the custom of two queens, Catherine de' Medici and Mary Stuart, with the custom of the Parliament of Paris, and for twenty years syndic of his guild, who lived on that street.

Lecamus's house was one of the three which formed the three corners of the square at the end of Pont au Change, of which naught remains to-day save the tower of the old Palais de Justice which formed the fourth corner. At the angle of that house, situated at the corner of Pont au Change and of the quay which is to-day called Quai aux Fleurs, the architect had made a recess for a Madonna, which was always lighted by tapers and adorned with bouquets of real flowers in summer and of artificial flowers in winter. On Rue du Pont as well as on Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie, the house rested on wooden pillars. All the houses in the tradesmen's quarters had behind these pillars a gallery, where pedestrians walked under cover on the bare ground, hardened by the mud which they left upon it and which made it decidedly rough. In all the cities of France, these galleries were called *the pillars*, a generic term to which was added a qualifying phrase, according to the trade of the quarter, as the pillars of the Market, the pillars of the Butchery. These galleries, which were made necessary by the changeable, rainy atmosphere of

Paris, and which were a prominent feature in the physiognomy of the city, have entirely disappeared. Just as there is no longer a single house directly over the river, so there are barely a hundred feet remaining of the old pillars of the Market, which longest resisted the inroads of time; and in a few days even that remnant of the gloomy labyrinth of old Paris will be demolished. Assuredly, the continued existence of these relics of the Middle Ages is incompatible with the grandeurs of modern Paris. So that these observations are intended less as an expression of regret for these fragments of the old city than as an attempt to preserve their likeness by the last living evidence, now on the point of crumbling to dust, and to absolve the future, which treads upon the heels of the present century, from the necessity of seeking descriptions.

The walls of the house in question were built of wood and covered with slates. The intervals between the pieces of wood had been filled with bricks laid crosswise, so as to form the design called Hungary point; the same thing can still be seen in some old provincial towns. The window-sills and lintels, also of wood, were richly carved, as was the pillar at the corner above the Madonna, and the pillars of the shop front. Each window and each of the beams which separated the different floors were adorned with arabesques of fantastic persons or animals surrounded by conventional foliage. On the street side, as well as on the river, the roof of the house was shaped like two cards placed against each

other; that is to say, there was a gable end on the street and a gable end on the water. The roof, like the roof of a Swiss châlet, overhung so far that there was an outer gallery on the second floor, with a balustrade, where the furrier could walk under cover, overlooking the whole street on one side, and on the other the basin between the two bridges and the two rows of houses.

The houses on the river were at that time very valuable. The system of drains and running water was still a thing of the future; there was only the drain running around the city, finished by Aubriot, the first man of genius and powerful will who ever thought—he lived under Charles V.—of improving the sanitary condition of Paris. Houses situated as was Lecamus's found in the river both the water necessary to life and a natural outlet for the rain-water and domestic waste. The vast works of that nature which the provosts of the merchants constructed are also disappearing. Only those who are more than forty years old can remember having seen the bottomless pits in which the waters were swallowed up, on Rue Montmartre, Rue du Temple, etc. Those terrifying, yawning holes did an immense amount of good in those old times. Their location will in all probability be permanently marked by the sudden caving in of the roadway at the spots where they opened: another archæological detail that will be inexplicable to the historian two centuries hence. One day, in 1816 or thereabouts, a little girl who was carrying to an actress at the Ambigu the

diamonds she was to wear in the part of a queen, was overtaken by a heavy shower, and drawn down into the old drain on Rue du Temple, where she would have disappeared had not the attention of a passer-by been attracted by her shrieks; but she had dropped the diamonds, which were found in a draught-hole. That incident caused a great deal of talk; it gave force to the demand for the suppression of those consumers of water and little girls. They were curious affairs, about five feet deep, with movable gratings or wire-nettings, which caused the flooding of the cellars when the artificial river produced by a heavy downpour could find no outlet through the grating, blocked with rubbish and filth, which the abutters often forgot to raise.

The front of Sieur Lecamus's shop was of glass, but was embellished with lead sashes which made the interior very dark. The furs were carried to the houses of the wealthy customers. To those who came to the shop to buy, the wares were shown out-of-doors, between the pillars, where the passage-way was always blocked during the day by tables, and clerks seated on stools, as could be seen under the pillars of the market fifteen years ago. From those advanced positions, the clerks and apprentices, male and female, talked, exchanged questions and answers, and accosted those who passed—customs of which the great Sir Walter Scott made use in his *Adventures of Nigel*. The sign, which represented an ermine, hung outside, like those of some village taverns, and was attached to an open-work

iron post, richly gilded. Above the ermine, on one side, were the words:

LECAMVS

FURRIER

TO MADAME LA ROYNE AND LE ROY NOSTRE SIRE;

and on the other:

TO MADAME LA ROYNE MÈRE AND MESSIEVRS DV PARLEMENT

The words *to Madame la Royne Mère* had been added quite recently. The gilding was new. The change indicated the recent revolution produced by the sudden violent death of Henri II., which overturned many fortunes at court, and was the beginning of the fortune of the Guises.

The back-shop looked on the river. In that room the venerable bourgeois and his wife, Mademoiselle Lecamus, were usually to be found. In those days, the wife of a man who was not nobly born had no right to the title of *dame;* but the wives of the bourgeois of Paris were entitled to be called *demoiselle*, by reason of the privileges granted and confirmed to their husbands by several kings to whom they had rendered eminent services. Between the back-shop and the wareroom was a wooden spiral staircase, which gave access to the upper floors where the large wareroom was and the apartment of the old couple, and to the attic rooms lighted by round

windows, where the children, the maid-servant, and the clerks and apprentices lived.

This crowding together of families, servants, and apprentices, and the small spaces occupied by each person inside the house, where the apprentices slept together in a large room under the eaves, explains the enormous population of Paris which was then massed upon a tenth of the territory covered by the present city; the curious details of private life in the Middle Ages; and the stratagems of love, which, with all deference to serious historians, can be found only in the romancers, and which would have been lost but for them. At that period, a very great nobleman, like Admiral de Coligny, for instance, occupied three rooms in Paris, and his retinue was quartered at a public-house near by. There were not then in all Paris fifty *hôtels*,—that is to say, palaces belonging to sovereign princes, or to great vassals, who lived more sumptuously than the greatest German sovereigns, like the Duke of Bavaria or the Elector of Saxony.

The kitchen of the Lecamus establishment was under the back-shop, directly on the river. It had a glass door opening on a sort of iron balcony from which the cook could draw water with a pail, and where the family linen was washed. The back-shop was the merchant's dining-room, study, and salon, all in one. In that important apartment, which was always noticeable for its handsome wainscoting, and embellished with some object of art, and a chest, the merchant's life was passed; it was the scene of

the merry suppers after the day's work, and of the secret conferences concerning the political interests of the bourgeoisie and the monarchy. The powerful guilds of Paris could at that time equip a hundred thousand men for war. The decisions of the merchants were supported by their servants, their clerks, their apprentices, and their workmen. The bourgeois had, in the provost of merchants, a leader whom they obeyed, and in the Hôtel de Ville a palace where they had the right to assemble. In that famous *parlouer aux bourgeois* solemn deliberations were held. Except for the constant sacrifices which had made war unendurable to the guilds, exhausted by their losses and by famine, it may be doubted whether Henri IV., that rebellious subject become king at last, would ever have entered Paris.

The reader will find no difficulty now in picturing to himself that corner of old Paris where the bridge and the quay wind to-day, where the trees of the Quai aux Fleurs rear their heads, and where naught remains to remind one of that time save the famous high tower of the old Palais de Justice, which gave the signal for the Saint-Bartholomew. Strangely enough, one of the houses lying at the foot of that tower, then surrounded by wooden shops, the house of Lecamus, was destined to see the beginning of one of those episodes which paved the way for that night of massacres, unhappily more favorable than fatal to Calvinism.

At the time when this narrative begins, Paris was intensely excited over the audacity of the professors

of the new religious doctrines. A Scotchman named Stuart had murdered President Minard, that one of the members of the Parliament to whom public opinion attributed the largest share in the execution of his fellow-member Anne du Bourg, recently burned in Place de Grève, after the late king's tailor, whom Henri II. and Diane de Poitiers had caused to be put to the question in their presence. Paris was so closely watched that the archers compelled passers-by to pray before the Madonna, in order to detect heretics, who either complied with bad grace, or refused altogether to perform an act so opposed to their ideas. The two archers who had been standing at the corner of Lecamus's house had gone away; so that Christophe, the furrier's son, who was strongly suspected of having turned his back on Catholicism, was able to go out without the fear that they would force him to pray to the image of the Virgin. It was beginning to grow dark at seven o'clock in April, 1560, and the apprentices, seeing that only a few people were still passing under the pillars on both sides of the street, were removing the merchandise displayed outside as samples, preparatory to closing the house and the shop. Christophe Lecamus, an ardent youth of twenty-two, stood in the doorway, apparently absorbed in watching the apprentices.

"Monsieur," said one of them to Christophe, pointing to a man who was walking back and forth under the gallery with a hesitating air, "that fellow may be a thief or a spy; at all events, he can't be

an honest man: if he had any business with us, he would come up and speak to us openly, instead of hanging back as he does. And what a way of carrying himself!" he added, imitating the stranger. "How he hides his face in his cloak! What a yellow eye! What a hungry look!"

When the stranger thus described by the apprentice saw that Christophe was alone in the doorway, he hurriedly left the gallery opposite, where he was walking, crossed the street, and as he passed under the pillars by Lecamus's shop, before the apprentices had returned to close the shutters, he accosted the young man.

"I am Chaudieu!" he said in an undertone.

When he heard the name of one of the most celebrated leaders and most devoted actors in the terrible drama called the Reformation, Christophe started as a faithful peasant would have started on recognizing his king in disguise.

"Do you wish to look at furs? Although it's almost dark, I will show you some myself," said Christophe, to deceive the apprentices whom he heard behind him.

With a gesture, he invited the reformer to enter. But he replied that he preferred to talk outside. Christophe went in to get his cap, and followed the disciple of Calvin.

Although banished by royal edict, Chaudieu, the secret plenipotentiary of Théodore de Bèze and Calvin, who directed the Reformation in France from Geneva, went and came as he chose, defying

the cruel punishment to which the Parliament, acting in concert with the Church and the king in order to make a terrible example, had condemned one of its own members, the celebrated Anne du Bourg. This minister of the faith, whose brother was a captain and one of Admiral de Coligny's best soldiers, was one of the arms with which Calvin aroused France at the beginning of the twenty-two years of religious wars, then about to be inaugurated. He was one of those secret wheels of the machine which afford the best explanation of the mighty action of the Reformation.

Chaudieu led Christophe to the water's edge by a subterranean passage similar to that of the Marion arch, which was filled in ten years ago. This passage, the entrance to which was between Lecamus's house and the house next it, ran under Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie, and was called the Pont-aux-Fourreurs. It was used by the dyers of the city to go to the river to wash their threads, their silks, and their cloths. A small boat was there, in the charge of a single boatman. A stranger, small of stature and very simply dressed, sat in the bow. In an instant the boat was in the middle of the river, and the boatman guided her beneath one of the wooden arches of Pont au Change, where he quickly made her fast to an iron ring. As yet no one had spoken.

"We can talk here without fear, there are neither spies nor traitors within hearing," said Chaudieu, glancing at the two men who were unknown to Christophe.—"Are you filled with that spirit of

self-sacrifice which inspires martyrs? Are you ready to endure everything for our blessed cause? Do you fear the tortures undergone by the late king's tailor and by Counsellor du Bourg,—tortures which await the majority of us?" he asked Christophe, turning a radiant face upon him.

"I will confess the Gospel," replied Lecamus, simply, looking at the windows of the back-shop.

The light of the lamp on the table at which his father was undoubtedly looking over his account-books reminded him by its gleam of the domestic joys and the tranquil life which he was renouncing. It was a swift but perfect vision. The young man's eyes embraced that neighborhood instinct with the harmonies of bourgeois existence, where his childhood had passed so happily, where Babette Lallier, his betrothed, had her home, where everything promised him a pleasant, busy life; he saw the past, he saw his future, and he sacrificed everything, or at least staked everything. Such were the men of those days.

"We need go no farther," said the enthusiastic boatman; "we know him now for one of our *saints!* If the Scotchman had missed his mark, he would have killed the infamous Minard."

"Yes," said Lecamus. "My life belongs to the Church, and I give it joyfully for the triumph of the Reformation, upon which I have reflected in all seriousness. I know what we are doing for the welfare of the nations. In two words, Popery enjoins celibacy, the Reformation favors the family. It is time

to rid France of her monks, and to restore their property to the crown, which will sell it sooner or later to the bourgeoisie. Let us not fear to die for our children and for our families to be some day free and happy."

The faces of the enthusiastic youth, of Chaudieu, of the boatman, and of the stranger sitting on the forward thwart, lighted by the last gleams of twilight, formed a picture which merits description, especially as that description contains the entire history of that period, if it be true that it is given to certain men to represent the spirit of their age.

The religious reformation undertaken by Luther in Germany, by John Knox in Scotland, and by Calvin in France, took an especially firm hold of the lower classes wherever the habit of thought had taken root. The great noblemen supported the movement only to advance interests entirely unconnected with the cause of religion. To these widely different parties were added adventurers, ruined noblemen, and younger sons to whom disturbances of any sort were equally agreeable. But among the artisans and the tradesmen, the faith in the new religion was sincere and based upon reflection. The poorer nations were converted at once to a religion which would turn over church property to the State, suppress convents, and deprive church dignitaries of their enormous revenues. The whole business world reckoned up the profits of this religious operation, and devoted themselves, body, soul, and purse, to its successful execution; but among the youth of the French

bourgeoisie the new doctrine encountered that noble tendency toward sacrifices of every kind which kindles the enthusiasm of the young, to whom selfishness is unknown. Eminent men, keen minds, such as are always found in the midst of the masses, foresaw a republic in the Reformation, and aimed to establish throughout Europe the form of government established in the United Provinces, which triumphed at last in their struggle with the greatest power of that age, Spain, governed by Philip II. and represented in the Low Countries by the Duke of Alva. Jean Hotoman was then meditating his famous book in which that project is set forth, and which sowed in France the seed of those ideas, destined to be revived by the League, to be repressed by Richelieu and again by Louis XIV., to reappear with the economists and encyclopædists under Louis XV., and to burst forth in full bloom under Louis XVI.; always favored by the younger branches, by the House of Orléans in 1789, as by the House of Bourbon in 1589. He who says examination, says rebellion. Every rebellion is either the cloak beneath which a prince conceals himself, or the swaddling-clothes of a new domination. The House of Bourbon, the younger Valois princes, were behind the Reformation.

At the moment when the skiff lay under the arch of Pont au Change, the question was curiously complicated by the ambition of the Guises, who were rivals of the Bourbons; thus the crown, represented by Catherine de' Medici, was able to maintain the

struggle for thirty years by opposing them to one another; whereas, later, the crown, instead of being pulled this way and that by several hands, found itself face to face with the people, with no barrier between: Richelieu and Louis XIV. had demolished the barrier of the nobility, Louis XV. the barrier of the parliaments. A king left alone before the people, as Louis XVI. then was, will always yield.

Christophe Lecamus well represented the ardent, devoted portion of the people: his fair face had the harsh, warm tone which distinguishes some blonds; his hair was of a color resembling the yellow of copper; his blue-gray eyes were bright and sparkling,—in them only did his noble soul reveal itself; for the outline of his face was bad, and the irregularity of its almost triangular shape was not disguised by that air of nobility which distinguishes well-bred men; and his low forehead denoted nothing more than great energy of character. Life seemed to centre in his slightly hollow chest. Christophe was nervous rather than full-blooded, his complexion was rough, dry, and harsh in tone. His sharp nose denoted the shrewdness of the common people, just as his face, taken as a whole, denoted an intelligence capable of giving a good account of itself on any point of the circumference, but lacking the power to embrace its whole extent. His eyes, over which the arch of the eyebrows, barely covered with a white down, protruded like an awning, were surrounded by a pale-blue ring, which became a gleaming white at the top of the nose; a detail which

almost always indicates excessive excitability. Christophe was the type of the man of the people who devotes himself body and soul to a cause, fights for it, and allows himself to be misled; clever enough to understand and promote an idea, too noble to seek selfish advantage from it, too generous to sell himself.

Beside Lecamus's son, Chaudieu, that fervent minister of the faith, with the brown hair, thinned by sleepless nights, with the yellow complexion, the combative brow, the eloquent mouth, the flashing brown eyes, the short, upturned chin, was a typical representative of that Christian faith to which the Reformation owed so many sincere, fanatical pastors whose spirit and courage kindled the enthusiasm of the people. The aide de camp of Théodore de Bèze and Calvin formed an admirable contrast to the furrier's son. He well represented the living cause of which the effect was seen in Christophe. He was precisely what one would imagine the heat generator of a popular machine to be.

The boatman, an impulsive creature, bronzed by the sun, accustomed to nights in the dew and days under fire, to say little and act quickly, with a greedy, orange-hued eye, like a vulture's, and with curly black hair, was a type of the adventurer who risks his all in a single venture, as a gambler stakes his fortune on a card. Everything in his appearance indicated terrible passions, a hardihood which would recoil at nothing. His vigorous muscles were adapted to silence as well as to speech. His manner was

rather presumptuous than noble. His nose, which, although thin, was turned up, sniffed the battle from afar. He seemed active and shrewd. At any period of the world's history he would have been picked as a party leader. If there had been no Reformation, he would have been Pizarro, Cortez, or Morgan the Exterminator,—a man of violent action of some sort.

The third man, who sat on a thwart, wrapped in his cape, evidently belonged to the highest social order. The fineness of his linen, the cut, material, and odor of his garments, the style and material of his gloves, indicated an habitué of the court, even as his attitude, his haughty, tranquil air, and his keen glance indicated the man of war. His appearance was disquieting at first and imposed respect. One respects a man who respects himself. He was small and deformed, but his manners soon made one forget the defects of his figure. When the ice was once broken, he displayed a good-humored decision, an indefinable energy, which made him very attractive. He had the blue eyes and short nose of the House of Navarre, and the accentuated Spanish type of face which was characteristic of the Bourbon kings of France.

In a word, the scene became intensely interesting.

"Well," said Chaudieu, as soon as young Lecamus finished his sentence, "this boatman is La Renaudie; and this is Monseigneur le Prince de Condé," he added, pointing to the little hunchback.

Thus those four men represented the faith of the common people, the spirit of the Word, the hand of the soldier, and royalty hiding in the shadow.

"You shall now learn what we expect of you," continued the minister, after a pause, to give young Lecamus's astonishment time to subside. "In order that you may make no mistake, we are obliged to divulge to you the most momentous secrets of the Reformation."

The prince and La Renaudie motioned to the minister to continue, when he paused to allow the prince himself to speak if he wished. Like all great men engaged in conspiracies, whose policy is not to show themselves until the decisive moment, the prince held his peace—not from cowardice, for in those critical times he was the soul of the conspiracy, he shrank from no danger and freely risked his head; but with a sort of kingly dignity he allowed the minister to explain the enterprise under consideration, and contented himself with studying the new instrument of which he must needs make use.

"My child," said Chaudieu, in the form of speech used by the Huguenots, "we are about to fight our first battle with the Roman harlot. A few days hence our troops will be dying on scaffolds, or the Guises will be no more. Ere long, then, the king and the two queens will be in our power. This is the first armed uprising of our religion in France; and France will not lay down her arms until the victory is completely won: I speak of the nation, mark you, not of the kingdom. The majority of the great men of the kingdom detect the purpose of the Cardinal de Lorraine and the duke, his brother.

On the plea of defending the Catholic religion, the House of Lorraine proposes to claim the crown of France as its patrimony. Leaning upon the Church, it has made of the Church a formidable ally, it has the monks for partisans, for acolytes, for spies. It assumes the guardianship of the throne which it seeks to usurp, of the House of Valois which it seeks to destroy. If we decide to rise in arms, it is because the liberties of the people and the interests of the nobility are equally endangered, equally menaced. Let us strangle at its birth a faction as odious as that of the Bourguignons, who formerly laid waste Paris and France with fire and sword. It required a Louis XI. to put an end to the quarrel between the Bourguignons and the crown; but to-day a Prince de Condé will find a way to prevent the Lorraines from renewing it. This is not civil war, but a duel between the Guises and the Reformation, a duel to the death; we will make them bite the dust, or they will make us."

"Well said," cried the prince.

"In this emergency, Christophe," interposed La Renaudie, "we wish to leave nothing undone which will tend to increase the size of our party—for there is a party in the Reformation, the party of thwarted interests, of nobles sacrificed to the Lorraines, of old soldiers shamefully fooled at Fontainebleau, whence the cardinal has driven them forth, causing gibbets to be set up on which to hang those who should ask the king for the cost of their equipment, or for their arrears of pay."

"And this, my child," said Chaudieu, observing symptoms of horror in Christophe's expression, "this is what compels us to triumph with the armed hand instead of triumphing by persuasion and martyrdom. The queen-mother is on the point of entering into our views; not that she means to abjure,—she has not gone so far as that,—but she may be driven to it by our triumph. However that may be, Queen Catherine, humiliated and made desperate by the consciousness that the power which she hoped to wield after the king's death is passing into the hands of the Guises, alarmed by the influence of the young Queen Mary, the niece and confederate of the Lorraines,—Catherine, I say, is naturally disposed to lend her assistance to the princes and nobles who propose to venture a bold stroke to deliver her. At this moment, although apparently devoted to the Guises, she detests them, she desires their ruin, and will make use of us against them; but monseigneur will make use of her against all. The queen-mother will give her assent to our plans. We shall have on our side the constable, whom monseigneur has just been to see at Chantilly, but who will not stir without an order from his masters. Being monseigneur's uncle, he will not leave him in the lurch; and this noble-hearted prince hesitates not to endanger his own life in order to force Anne de Montmorency to make up his mind. Everything is prepared, and we have fixed upon you to make known to Queen Catherine the terms of our treaty of alliance, the drafts of proposed edicts, and the

bases of the new government to be established. The court is at Blois. Many of our friends are there; but they are those who are to lead us hereafter, and like monseigneur," he added, waving his hand toward the prince, "they must never be suspected, we must all sacrifice ourselves for them. The queen-mother and our friends are the object of such minute espionage, that it is impossible to employ as intermediary a person who is at all known or of any prominence; such a person would instantly be suspected and would be unable to communicate with Madame Catherine. God should send us at this juncture David the shepherd and his sling, to confront Goliath of Guise. Your father, who is a good Catholic, unfortunately for himself, is the furrier to both queens, and always has something or other to send them; persuade him to send you to court. You will arouse no suspicion and will in no way compromise Queen Catherine. Any one of our leaders might pay with his head for an imprudent act which would arouse a suspicion of the queen-mother's connivance with him. Where a great man, once detected, would cause the alarm to be given, an insignificant person like you will attract no notice. Look you! the Guises employ so many spies that there is no place but the river where we can talk fearlessly. You, my son, are like the sentinel who is in duty bound to die at his post. Understand this: if you are detected, we shall all abandon you; we shall throw upon you, if need be, all the opprobrium and infamy. We shall say, if it seems

best, that you are a creature of the Guises sent to play this rôle in order to ruin us. So, you see, we ask of you an unconditional sacrifice."

"If you lose your life," said the Prince de Condé, "I pledge my word as a gentleman that your family shall be sacred to the House of Navarre; I will carry them in my heart and serve them in every possible way."

"Your promise, my prince, is sufficient," replied Christophe, forgetting that the plotter was a Gascon. "These are times when everyone, prince or bourgeois, should do his duty."

"There spoke a true Huguenot! If all our men were of his stamp," said La Renaudie, laying his hand on Christophe's shoulder, "we should be masters to-morrow."

"Young man," added the prince, "I propose to show you that if Chaudieu preaches, if the gentleman is armed, the prince fights. In this fierce game all stakes are of equal value."

"Hark ye," said La Renaudie, "I shall not hand you the papers until you reach Beaugency, for they must not be endangered during the whole journey. You will find me on the pier there: my face, my voice, my clothing, will be so changed that you will be unable to recognize me. But I will say to you: 'Are you a *guêpin*?' and you will reply: 'Ready to serve.'—As to the execution of your mission, this is what you must do. You will find a horse at the *Pinte Fleurie*, near Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. You will ask for Jean le Breton, who will take you to the

stable and give you one of my ponies which has been known to do thirty leagues in eight hours. Leave the city by the Bussy gate; Breton has a pass for me, take it for yourself and be off; make a detour around all the towns. You can reach Orléans by daylight."

"And the horse?" queried young Lecamus.

"He won't give out before you reach Orléans," replied La Renaudie. "Leave him at the entrance to the Bannier faubourg; for the gates are well guarded, and you must not arouse suspicion. It is for you, my friend, to see that you play your part shrewdly. Invent whatever fable you think best to enable you to reach the third house on the left as you enter Orléans; it belongs to one Tourillon, glover. You will knock thrice on the door, crying: 'Service of Messieurs de Guise!'—The man is, to all appearance, a frantic Guisard, we four are the only ones who know that he is really one of us. He will furnish you with a trustworthy boatman, another Guisard of the same stamp. Go down to the pier with all speed, and take a green boat with a white gunwale. You will probably reach Beaugency about noon to-morrow. There I will find you a boat on which you can go down to Blois without incurring any risk. Our enemies, the Guises, do not watch the Loire, they only watch the landing-places. Thus you will be able to see the queen to-morrow or the day after."

"Your words are engraved here," said Christophe, touching his forehead.

Chaudieu embraced the boy with unusually devout fervor; he was proud of him.

"May God watch over you!" he said, pointing to the setting sun, which tinged with red the old shingled roofs and sent its rays through the forest of timbers among which the water foamed and bubbled.

"You are of the race of old Jacques Bonhomme!" said La Renaudie, pressing Christophe's hand.

"We shall meet again, *monsieur*," said the prince, with a gesture of infinite charm, in which there was something very like friendship.

With a stroke of the oars, La Renaudie landed the young conspirator on the lower step of the flight which led into his house, and the boat instantly disappeared under the arches of Pont au Change.

*

Christophe shook the iron grating which closed the stairway leading to the river, and shouted; Mademoiselle Lecamus heard him, opened one of the windows in the back-shop, and asked him how he came there. Christophe replied that he was freezing, and that the first thing to be done was to let him in.

"So, my young master," rejoined La Bourguignonne, the servant, "you went out by the street door and you come back by the river door, eh? Your father will be in a pretty rage."

Christophe, bewildered by the incident which had brought him into direct relations with the Prince de Condé, La Renaudie, and Chaudieu, and even more excited by the probable spectacle of civil war close at hand, made no reply; he rushed hurriedly up from the kitchen to the back-shop; but his mother, a fanatical old Catholic, could not restrain her wrath when he appeared.

"I will warrant that the three men with whom you were talking yonder are ref—" she began.

"Hush, wife," exclaimed the sage, white-haired old man, who was turning the leaves of a huge book.—"Here, you lazy knaves," he added, turning to three boys who had long since finished their supper, "why don't you go to bed? It's eight o'clock, and you must be up at five in the morning.

By the way, you must carry Président de Thou his cap and gown. Go, all three of you, and take your clubs and your rapiers. If you should fall in with other good-for-naughts like yourselves, you'll be in force at all events."

"Shall we also take the ermine *surcot* which the young queen ordered, to be delivered at the Hôtel de Soissons? a courier is to go from there to Blois for the queen-mother," said one of the clerks.

"No," said the syndic; "Queen Catherine's account amounts to three thousand crowns; it's high time that I had the money, and I mean to go to Blois myself."

"Father, I can't allow you to run the risk of travelling about the country, at your age and in such times as these. I am twenty-two, you can trust me to do this for you," said Christophe, casting a longing glance at a box which probably contained the *surcot*.

"Are you glued to the bench?" the old man roared at the apprentices, who instantly took their cloaks and rapiers and Monsieur de Thou's furs.

The Parliament was to receive at the Palais, on the following day, as its president, that illustrious man, who, after signing the death-warrant of Counsellor du Bourg, was destined to be called upon to pass sentence on the Prince de Condé before the end of the year.

"La Bourguignonne," said the old man, "go and ask my gossip Lallier to come and sup with us, and bring the wine: we'll furnish the eatables; be sure to tell him to bring his daughter."

The syndic of the furriers was a fine old man of sixty, with white hair and a broad, smooth forehead. As furrier to the court for forty years, he had seen all the revolutions of the reign of François I., and had clung to his royal patent despite the rivalries of mistresses. He had witnessed the arrival at court of the young Catherine de' Medici, barely fifteen years of age; he had watched her bending the knee to the Duchesse d'Etampes, her father-in-law's mistress, and to the Duchesse de Valentinois, the mistress of her husband, the late king. But the furrier had steered his way safely through all those strange vicissitudes, in which court tradesmen had so often shared the disgrace of royal favorites. His prudence equalled his fortune. He maintained an attitude of excessive humility. Pride had never caught him in its snares. He assumed such an inconsequential, mild, obliging, impoverished manner at court, in the presence of the princesses, queens, and favorites, that his modesty and affability had preserved the sign of his establishment intact. Such a policy necessarily denoted a shrewd, far-sighted man. He was as despotic at home as he was humble elsewhere; under his own roof he was absolute. He was greatly respected by his confrères, and he enjoyed the very highest consideration because of his long possession of the first place in his branch of trade. He was always ready to do a friend a service, and among the many services he had rendered to others, none was more noteworthy than the assistance which he for a long time gave to

Ambroise Paré, the famous surgeon of the sixteenth century, who owed it to him that he was able to pursue his studies.

In all the disputes which arose between merchants, Lecamus showed a conciliatory disposition. Thus the general esteem in which he was held solidified his position among his equals, as his assumed character kept him in favor at court. After obtaining by intrigue, as a matter of policy, the honors of warden in his parish church, he did what was necessary to maintain himself in the odor of sanctity with the curé of Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs, who looked upon him as one of the most faithful supporters of the Catholic Church in all Paris. Thus, at the time of the convocation of the States-General, he was unanimously chosen to represent the third estate, through the influence of the curés of Paris, which in those days was immense. This old man was one of those deep, self-contained, ambitious mortals, who bend the knee to everyone for fifty years, stealing from one office to another, no one being able to tell how they get there, but who appear at last peacefully seated where no one, not even the most audacious of men, would have dared to avow at the outset of his career that he hoped to arrive: the distance was so great, there were so many chasms to be crossed into which one might fall!

Lecamus, who had an enormous fortune hidden away, preferred to run no risk and looked forward to a brilliant future for his son. Instead of that personal ambition which often sacrifices the future

to the present, he had family ambition—a sentiment unknown in our day, destroyed by the idiotic provisions of our laws concerning inheritances. Lecamus looked forward to the time when he himself should be first president of the Parliament of Paris in the person of his grandson.

Christophe, a godson of the illustrious historian De Thou, received a most thorough education ; but it had led him to the spirit of doubt and scrutiny which was making rapid progress among the students and the faculties of the University. At this time, Christophe was studying for the bar, that first step toward the magistracy. The old furrier pretended to have some hesitation with regard to his son : sometimes he seemed to incline toward making him his successor in business, sometimes toward making an advocate of him; but, in reality, his heart was set upon a seat as counsellor in Parliament for him. This tradesman aspired to place the Lecamus family on a level with the celebrated old families of the Parisian bourgeoisie, from which came the Pasquiers, the Molés, the Mirons, the Séguiers, Lamoignon, Du Tillet, Lecoigneux, Lescalopier, the Goix, the Arnaulds, the famous sheriffs, and the great provosts of merchants, among whom the throne found so many supporters. And so, in order that Christophe might be able to maintain his position when the time came, he proposed to marry him to the daughter of the richest jeweller in the city, his gossip Lallier, whose nephew was destined to present the keys of Paris to Henri IV. The project most deeply rooted

in the worthy bourgeois's heart was to employ half of his own fortune and half of the jeweller's in purchasing an extensive and beautiful seignorial estate, a long and arduous affair in those days. But that deep politician knew his epoch too well to be in ignorance of the great convulsions which were in preparation: his judgment was keen and unerring when he foresaw the division of the kingdom into two hostile camps. The useless punishments on Place de l'Estrapade, the execution of the king's tailor, and more recently of Counsellor Anne du Bourg, the present connivance of the great nobles, and that of a royal favorite under François I., with the reformers, were alarming portents. The furrier had resolved to remain a Catholic, royalist, and parliamentarian, whatever might happen; but privately he was well pleased that Christophe should be connected with the Reformation. He knew that he was wealthy enough to ransom Christophe, if he were compromised too far; and then, if France did become Calvinist, his son could rescue the family in the event of one of those fierce Parisian *émeutes* of which the bourgeoisie still retained a vivid remembrance, and which they were destined to repeat during four reigns. But the old furrier, like Louis XI., did not breathe these thoughts even to himself; his cunning went so far as to deceive his wife and son.

This consequential personage had long been at the head of the richest and most populous quarter of Paris—the Centre—under the title of *quartenier*, which was to become so celebrated fifteen years

later. Dressed in broadcloth, like all prudent bourgeois who obeyed the sumptuary ordinances, Sieur Lecamus—he clung to that title, which Charles V. accorded to the bourgeois of Paris, and which enabled them to purchase seignorial estates and to call their wives by the high-sounding name of demoiselles—wore no gold chain, no silk, but an honest doublet with huge buttons of blackened silver, milled stockings reaching above the knee, and leather shoes with buckles. His fine linen shirt protruded in great puffs, in accordance with the fashion of the period, between his half-opened jacket and his breeches. Although the light from the lamp fell full upon the old man's large and handsome face, it was impossible for Christophe to divine the thoughts concealed beneath his father's florid Dutch skin; but he realized, none the less, all the advantage the old man expected to derive from his affection for pretty Babette Lallier. And so he smiled bitterly, like a man who had formed an irrevocable resolution, when he heard the invitation sent to his betrothed.

When La Bourguignonne had left the room with the apprentices, old Lecamus glanced at his wife, no longer concealing his determined, absolute character.

"You will not be satisfied until you have brought this boy to the gallows with your damned tongue!" he said to her, sternly.

"I would rather see him condemned and sure of salvation, than living and a Huguenot," she said, gloomily. "To think that a child who lived in my womb for nine months is not a good Catholic, but

is eating of Colas's cow,* and will go to hell for eternity!"

She began to weep.

"Old fool," said the furrier, "let him live, then, if only for the purpose of converting him! You said something before our apprentices that may result in our house being burned down and all of us roasted like fleas in straw."

The mother crossed herself, sat down, and said no more.

"Now, then," said the goodman, glancing at his son with the air of a judge, "just explain to me what you were doing out yonder on the river with—come nearer so that I can speak to you," he said, grasping his son by the arm and pulling him toward him—"with the Prince de Condé," he whispered in his ear. Christophe started.—"Do you suppose the court furrier doesn't know all the faces at court? and do you suppose I don't know what is going on? Monseigneur the Grand Master has given orders for troops to be sent to Amboise. To withdraw troops from Paris and send them to Amboise, when the court is at Blois—to send them by Chartres and Vendôme, instead of taking the Orléans road—what does that mean? there's going to be trouble. If the queens want their *surcots*, they can send and get them. It may be that the Prince de Condé has resolved to kill Messieurs de Guise, who, on their side, are thinking, perhaps, about getting rid of him. The prince will make use of the Huguenots to defend

* *La vache à Colas*=Protestantism.

himself. Of what use would a furrier's son be in such a scrimmage? When you are married and an advocate in Parliament, you'll be as wise as your father. A furrier's son ought to wait, before taking up with a new religion, until everybody else belongs to it. I don't condemn the reformers, that's not my business; but the court is Catholic, the two queens are Catholic, the Parliament is Catholic; we supply them all with furs, so we must be Catholic. You must not leave the house, Christophe; or I'll send you to President de Thou, your godfather, who will keep you by him night and day, and make you blacken paper instead of allowing your soul to be blackened in the cook-shop of those damned Genevans!"

"Father," said Christophe, leaning on the back of the old man's chair, "pray send me to Blois to carry the *surcot* to Queen Mary and collect our money from the queen-mother; otherwise I am lost! and you care for me—"

"Lost?" echoed the old man, without manifesting the slightest astonishment. "If you stay here, you won't be lost, for I shall always know where to find you."

"I shall be killed."

"How?"

"The most ardent Huguenots have fixed upon me to act for them in a certain matter, and if I fail to do what I have promised, they will kill me in broad daylight, in the street, here in this house, as they killed Minard. But, if you send me to the court on

your business, I may, perhaps, be able to satisfy both sides. Either I shall succeed without having run any risk, and so shall be able to obtain a prominent position in the party, or else, if the danger is too great, I will simply attend to your business."

The father sprang to his feet as if his chair were of red-hot iron.

"Leave us, wife," he said, "and see that Christophe and I are not interrupted."

When Mademoiselle Lecamus had gone out, the furrier took his son by a button and led him to the corner of the room nearest the bridge.

"Christophe," he said in his ear, as he did when he mentioned the Prince de Condé, "be a Huguenot, if you are so viciously inclined, but be prudent about it, keep it to yourself, and don't behave so that people in the quarter will point their fingers at you. This that you have just admitted shows how much confidence the leaders have in you. What is it you're to do at court?"

"I shouldn't know how to tell you," replied Christophe, "for I have no very clear idea myself as yet."

"Hum! hum!" muttered the old man, looking fixedly at his son, "the rascal is trying to fool his father; he'll make his way in the world.—Look you," he continued in an undertone, "you're not going to court to make overtures to Messieurs de Guise, nor to the little king, our master, nor to little Queen Mary. They are all staunch Catholics; but I would stake my head that the Italian has some

grudge against the Scotch girl and the Lorraines—I know her: she always had a frantic longing to have a finger in the pie! the late king was so afraid of her that he did as the jewellers do, cut diamond with diamond, set one woman against another. That's the explanation of Queen Catherine's hatred of the poor Duchesse de Valentinois from whom she took the beautiful château of Chenonceaux. If it hadn't been for Monsieur le Connétable, the duchess would have been strangled, at least.—Back, my son! don't put yourself in the hands of that Italian creature, who has no passion except in the brain: a bad sort of woman! Yes, what they propose to send you to do at court may cause you a very bad headache," cried the father, as he saw that Christophe was about to reply. "My child, I have plans for your future and you would not interfere with them by making yourself useful to Queen Catherine; but, Jesus! don't risk your head! and those Guises would slice it off as La Bourguignonne slices a turnip, for the men who employ you will disavow you utterly."

"I know it, father," said Christophe.

"Are you as brave as that? You know it and still you risk it?"

"Yes, father."

"By Heaven!" cried the father, pressing his son to his heart, "we can understand each other; you are worthy of your father. My child, you will be the honor of the family, and I see that your old father can safely speak freely to you. But don't be more of a Huguenot than Messieurs de Coligny.

Don't draw the sword; you will be a man of the pen some time, so stick to your future rôle of limb of the law. Tell me nothing until after you have succeeded. If you send me no word within four days of your arrival at Blois, your silence will tell me that you are in danger. The old man will go to the rescue of the young man. I have not sold furs for thirty-two years without becoming familiar with the under side of court robes. I shall have the means of opening doors."

Christophe opened his eyes when he heard his father speak thus; but he feared some paternal snare, so held his peace.

"Well, make up the account and write a letter to the queen; I must start at once; otherwise the greatest disasters might happen."

"Start! But how?"

"I will buy a horse. Write, in God's name!"

"Ho! mother! money for your son," the furrier shouted to his wife.

The mother returned, ran to her chest, and took from it a purse which she handed to Christophe, who kissed her, deeply moved.

"The account was all ready," said his father, "here it is. I will go and write the letter."

Christophe took the account and put it in his pocket.

"But you will at least sup with us," said the goodman. "At this crisis, you and Lallier's daughter must exchange rings."

"Very well, I will go for her," said Christophe.

The young man distrusted his father's reliability; he was not as yet sufficiently acquainted with his character. He went up to his room, dressed for a journey, took a valise, stole downstairs, and placed it with his cloak and rapier under the counter in the shop.

"What the devil are you doing?" said his father, hearing his footsteps.

Christophe went and kissed the old man on both cheeks.

"I didn't want anyone to see my preparations for departure, so I have put everything under the counter," he whispered.

"Here is the letter," said the father.

Christophe took the paper and went out, as if to go in quest of their young neighbor.

A few moments after Christophe's departure, gossip Lallier and his daughter arrived, preceded by a maid-servant carrying three bottles of old wine.

"Well, where's Christophe?" inquired the two old people.

"Christophe?" cried Babette, "we have not seen him."

"My son's an insolent rascal! he deceives me as if I hadn't a hair on my face. What is going to happen, old friend? We live in an age when children have more wit than their fathers."

"Why, for a long time the whole quarter has called him a Protestant," said Lallier.

"Defend him on that score, gossip," said the

furrier to the jeweller; "youth is wild, it runs after new things; but Babette will keep him quiet, for she is newer than Calvin."

Babette smiled; she loved Christophe and was angry at all the things that were said against him. She was a child of the old bourgeoisie, brought up under the watchful eyes of her mother, who had never left her; her manner was gentle and correct, like her face; she was dressed in a woollen dress of harmonious shades of gray; her pure white neckerchief, simply pleated, stood out against her dress; she wore a brown velvet cap not unlike an infant's headgear, but it was embellished with ruffles and lappets of tanned, that is to say, tan-colored gauze, which fell on both sides of her face. Though a true blonde, and as white as a blonde, she seemed to be a shrewd, sly creature, trying all the while to conceal her mischievous propensities under the manners of a soberly educated maiden.

While the two servants went in and out, laying the cloth and setting out the mugs, the great pewter dishes and the knives and forks, the jeweller and his wife and the furrier and his daughter remained in front of the tall mantelpiece with lambrequins of red serge trimmed with black fringe, talking of trivial matters. In vain did Babette ask where Christophe could be—the young Huguenot's father and mother answered evasively; but when the two families were at table and the servants in the kitchen, Lecamus said to his future daughter-in-law:

"Christophe has started for the court."

"For Blois! He has started on such a journey without saying adieu to me!" she cried.

"The business was very urgent," said the old mother.

"Gossip," said the furrier, resuming their interrupted conversation, "we are going to have a rumpus in France; the reformers are stirring."

"If they triumph, it will be only after a long war, during which business will be bad," said Lallier, incapable of rising higher than the commercial sphere.

"My father, who saw the end of the war between the Bourguignons and the Armagnacs, told me that our family would not have been saved if one of his grandfathers, his mother's father, hadn't happened to be a Goix, one of the famous butchers of the market who were for the Bourguignons, while the other, a Lecamus, was of the Armagnac faction; they seemed to long to flay each other in public, but they understood each other in the family. So let us try to save Christophe; perhaps the time may come when he will save us."

"You're a shrewd fellow, gossip!" said the jeweller.

"No," rejoined Lecamus. "The bourgeoisie must look out for itself, the nobility and the common people are equally hostile to it. The Parisian bourgeoisie is an object of dread to everybody except the king, who knows that it's his friend."

"You know so much and have seen so many things," observed Babette, timidly, "pray explain to me what it is that the reformers want."

"Tell us that, gossip," cried the jeweller. "I knew the late king's tailor, and I looked upon him as a man of simple manners with no great genius; he was like you, I might say, a man to whom any priest would have given the sacrament without confession, and yet he plunged over his head in this new religion! a man whose two ears were worth several hundred thousand crowns. He must have had secrets to reveal, to induce the king and the Duchesse de Valentinois to be present when he was tortured."

"Terrible secrets, too!" said the furrier. "The Reformation, my friends," he continued in an undertone, "would give all the estates of the Church to the bourgeoisie. After the suppression of ecclesiastical privileges, the reformers intend to demand that nobles and bourgeois shall stand on an equal footing with regard to taxes, that the king alone shall be above other men, assuming that they leave a king in the State."

"Suppress the throne?" cried Lallier.

"Why, gossip," said Lecamus, "in the Low Countries the bourgeois govern themselves by sheriffs of their own choosing, who elect a temporary chief."

"Great God! gossip, we ought to be able to do these fine things and still remain Catholics," cried the jeweller.

"We are too old to see the triumph of the Parisian bourgeoisie, but it will triumph, gossip, at one time or another! Ah! the king must needs rely upon it

to resist, and we have always sold our support at a handsome price. Indeed, the last time, all the bourgeois were ennobled, it was made lawful for them to purchase seignorial estates and to bear the names of their estates, without special letters patent from the king. You, like myself, are the grandson of the Goix through the female line, and aren't we as good as many a nobleman?"

This harangue so alarmed the jeweller and the two women that it was followed by a profound silence. The fermentation of 1789 was already beginning to work in Lecamus's blood, nor was he too old to live to see the audacious bourgeois of the League.

"Is business still good, notwithstanding all this turmoil?" Lallier asked La Lecamus.

"It always does harm," she replied.

"That is why I am very anxious, indeed, to make an advocate of my son," said Lecamus, "for litigation never stops."

Thereafter the conversation was confined to commonplace subjects, to the great satisfaction of the jeweller, who had no fondness for political disturbances nor for bold flights of thought.

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The banks of the Loire, from Blois to Angers, were always a favorite resort of the last two branches of the royal race which occupied the throne of France before the House of Bourbon. That beautiful basin well deserves the honors which kings have bestowed upon it; witness what one of our most polished writers recently said of it:

"There is a province in France which has never been sufficiently admired. With the sweet perfumes of Italy, as flowery as the banks of the Guadalquivir, and lovely, in addition, with its own peculiar loveliness, entirely French, having always been French,—wherein it differs from our northern provinces, which are debased by contact with Germany, and from our southern provinces, which have lived in concubinage with the Moors, the Spaniards, and all other nations that have desired that relation,—that pure, chaste, gallant, loyal province is Touraine! There lies historic France! Auvergne is Auvergne, Languedoc is only Languedoc; but Touraine is France, and the most truly national river is the Loire, which waters Touraine. Therefore we should be less astonished by the vast number of monuments comprised within the departments which have taken the name, or derivatives of the name, of the Loire. At every step we take in that land of enchantment, we discover a picture whose frame is

a stream or a tranquil lake whose liquid depths reflect a château, its turrets, its woods, its gushing fountains. It was natural that where royalty abode by preference, where it established its court for so long a time, men of great fortune, men distinguished by birth or merit, should come together, and that they should erect their palaces as grand as themselves."

Is it not incomprehensible that royalty should have failed to follow the advice given indirectly by Louis XI., to make Tours the capital of the kingdom? The Loire could have been made navigable to that point by merchant vessels and men-of-war of light draught, without great expense. The seat of government would there have been out of danger from sudden invasions. The northern frontier towns would not then have required so much money for fortifications, which alone have cost the country as much as the splendors of Versailles. If Louis XIV. had listened to the advice of Vauban, who wished to build his residence at Mont-Louis, between the Loire and the Cher, the Revolution of 1789 might never have taken place.

Those lovely banks bear, here and there, marks of the royal affection. The châteaux of Chambord, Blois, Amboise, Chenonceaux, Chaumont, Plessis-lez-Tours, all those which the mistresses of our kings, the great nobles and the financiers built for themselves at Véretz, Azay-le-Rideau, Ussé, Villandri, Valençay, Chanteloup, Duretal,—the majority of which are still standing, although some have

disappeared,—are noble monuments which afford an idea of the marvels of that epoch, so imperfectly understood by the literary sect of the Middle-Agists. Of all these châteaux, that at Blois, where the court was then established, is the one upon which the magnificence of the Orléans and Valois placed its most brilliant stamp, and it is the most interesting to historians, archæologists, and Catholics. It was at this time completely isolated. The city, surrounded by strong walls with watch-towers, lay at the foot of the fortress, for the château really served the purpose of fortress and pleasure-house at once. Above the town, whose crowded houses and bluish roofs extended then as now from the Loire to the crest of the hill which rises from the right bank of the river, is a triangular plateau, cut from west to east by a stream which is of no importance to-day, for it flows under the town, but which, in the fifteenth century, so say the historians, formed a ravine of considerable size, of which there remains a deep, sunken road, almost a chasm, between the suburbs and the château.

It was on this plateau that the counts of Blois built a castle, with both northern and southern exposure, in the architectural style of the twelfth century, where the famous Thibault le Tricheur, Thibault le Vieux, and others held a famous court. In those days of pure feudalism, when the king was simply *primus inter pares*,—to use the expressive phrase of a king of Poland,—the counts of Champagne, the counts of Blois, the counts of Anjou, the simple barons of Normandie,

the dukes of Bretagne, lived like sovereigns and supplied kings for the proudest kingdoms. The Plantagenets of Anjou, the Lusignans of Poitou, the Roberts of Normandie, infused new blood into royal races by their audacity, and sometimes, as in the case of Du Glaicquin, simple knights declined the purple, preferring the sword of constable. When the crown annexed the comté of Blois to its domains, Louis XII., whose liking for the site was due, perhaps, to its distance from Plessis, of sinister memory, erected a building with eastern and western exposure, at right angles to the castle of the counts of Blois and connecting it with the remains of the still older buildings, of which nothing exists to-day save the vast hall in which the States-General met under Henri III. Before he became enamored of Chambord, François I. proposed to add two other wings, thus completing the square; but Chambord lured him away from Blois, and he built only one building there, which, in his day, and for his grandchildren, became the whole château.

This third structure, built by François I., is much more extensive and more ornate than the Louvre, which is credited to Henri II. It is the most fanciful example of the so-called Renaissance style. So that, at a later period, when a jealous architecture held sway and when but little heed was paid to the Middle Ages, in an age when literature was not so closely connected with art as in our day, La Fontaine said, in his kindly way, of the château of Blois: "Looking at it from without, the part that

François I. built pleased me more than all the rest: there are quantities of little galleries, little windows, little balconies, little decorations, with no attempt at regularity or order; there is something grand about the whole effect which pleases me immensely."

Thus the château of Blois had the merit of representing three different types of architecture, three periods, three systems, three dynasties. We may well say, therefore, that there is no royal abode comparable to the château of Blois in that respect. That vast pile affords, within the same enclosure, the same courtyard, a complete and accurate tableau of that great representation of the manners and life of nations which is called architecture. At the time when Christophe was on his way to court, the part of the domain which at the present time is occupied by the fourth palace, built seventy years later by Louis XIII.'s unruly brother, Gaston, during his exile, presented an aggregation of flower-beds and hanging-gardens picturesquely mingled with the rustic stairways and unfinished walks of François I.'s château. These gardens were connected by a bridge of a beautiful, bold design, which the old men of Blois may remember to have seen demolished, with a garden on the other side of the château, which was on the same level. The gentlemen attached to the service of Anne de Bretagne, or those who came from Bretagne to offer petitions, to confer with her or give her information concerning the state of affairs in that province, always awaited there the hour of her audiences, her morning reception, or her daily

promenade. Wherefore history has given the name of the *Perchoir aux Bretons* to that garden which, in our day, is some bourgeois's orchard and projects into Place des Jésuites. Place des Jésuites was then included in the gardens of this superb royal residence, which had its upper gardens and its lower gardens. One can see to this day, at a considerable distance from Place des Jésuites, a pavilion built by Catherine de' Medici, where, according to the historians of Blois, she had her warm baths. These details enable us to follow the very irregular arrangement of the gardens, which ascended and descended, following the inequalities of the ground, exceedingly rough and uneven all about the château,—a fact which constituted its strength and sadly embarrassed the Duc de Guise, as we shall see. The gardens were reached by exterior and interior galleries, the principal one being called the Galerie des Cerfs, because of its ornaments. This gallery ended at the magnificent staircase which undoubtedly inspired the famous double staircase at Chambord, and which led to the suites of apartments on the different floors.

Although La Fontaine preferred the château of François I. to that of Louis XII., the ingenuous architecture of the good king's edifice will be likely to please true artists, however much they may admire the magnificence of the *roi-chevalier*. The elegance of the two staircases at each extremity of Louis XII.'s château, the fine, original carving which abounded there and which time has sadly marred,

although its remains still delight the hearts of antiquarians; everything, even to the quasi-cloistral arrangement of the rooms, discloses extreme simplicity of manners. Clearly the court did not yet exist, had not developed as it was destined to develop under François I. and Catherine de' Medici, to the great detriment of feudal manners. As we gaze admiringly on the majority of the galleries, the capitals of certain columns, and divers small figures of exquisite delicacy, it is impossible not to fancy that Michel Columb, that great sculptor, the Michael-Angelo of Bretagne, exerted his talents there to gratify his Queen Anne, whom he immortalized on the tomb of her father, the last duc de Bretagne.

Whatever La Fontaine may say, nothing can be more imposing than the abode of the ostentatious François I. Thanks to an indefinable brutal indifference, to forgetfulness perhaps, the apartments occupied, at the time of which we write, by Catherine de' Medici and her son François II., still remain as they were then arranged. So that the historian can there review the tragic scenes of the drama of the Reformation, in which the twofold struggle of the Guises and Bourbons against the Valois forms one of the most complicated acts. It was at the château of Blois that the plot of the drama was unravelled.

The château of François I. entirely overshadows by its imposing pile the simple dwelling of Louis XII. On the side of the lower gardens, that is to say, of the modern Place des Jésuites, the château is almost

twice as high as on the side of the courtyard. The ground-floor, where the famous galleries are, forms the second floor on the garden side. Hence the first floor, where Catherine was then installed, is the third, and the royal apartments are on the fourth above the lower gardens, which in those days were separated from the foundations by a deep moat. Thus the château, which is of colossal size on the courtyard, seems absolutely gigantic when seen from the square below as it was seen by La Fontaine, who admits that he did not enter the courtyard or the apartments. From Place des Jésuites everything seems small. The balconies for promenading, the galleries, of marvellous workmanship, the carved windows, whose recesses are as large as boudoirs, and which were then used for boudoirs, resemble the fanciful decorations of the stage-setting of our modern operas when the scene-painters represent fairy palaces. But in the courtyard, although the three floors above the ground-floor reach to as great a height as the Pavillon de l'Horloge at the Tuileries, the infinite delicacy of the architecture obligingly reveals itself and fascinates our marvelling eyes.

This structure, where Catherine and Mary Stuart were holding their splendid court, is divided by a hexagonal tower in which there is a spiral stone staircase, a Moorish caprice, conceived by giants, built by dwarfs, which gives to that façade a dream-like aspect. The landings of the staircase form a spiral of square compartments attached to five sides of the tower, and supported by transverse corbels

embellished with arabesque carvings without and within. This dazzlingly beautiful creation of cunning and delicate details, abounding in marvels which endow the stones with speech, can be compared only to the profuse, deep-cut carvings of Chinese or Dieppe ivories. Indeed, the stone resembles lacework. Flowers, figures of men or animals, cling to the mouldings, become more numerous from step to step, and crown the tower with a key-stone whereon the chisels of sixteenth-century art have contended for supremacy with the artless hewers of images who, fifty years earlier, carved the key-stones of the two stairways built by Louis XII.

However dazzled we may be as we gaze upon these forms repeated with unwearying profusion, we cannot fail to observe that François I. lacked funds at Blois as Louis XIV. did at Versailles. More than one figure shows its pretty little head emerging from a block of unpolished stone. More than one fanciful carving is simply suggested by a few blows of the chisel on the abandoned stone, on which the dampness has brought forth its greenish mould. On the front, beside the delicate lacework of a window, the adjoining window displays its blocks of stone marred by time, which has carved it to suit its fancy. Even to the least artistic, least practised eye, there is a fascinating contrast between that façade, fairly running over with marvellous details, and the inner façade of the château of Louis XII., consisting, on the ground-floor, of several arches of vapory lightness, supported by slender

columns which rest below upon graceful galleries, and of two upper floors where the windows are carved with attractive sobriety of taste. Under the arches is a gallery with frescoed walls, and with a ceiling also painted; to this day some traces can be found of that magnificent style of decoration, copied from Italian palaces, and reminding one of the southern expeditions of our kings to whom the Milanese at one time belonged.

Opposite the château of François I. was the chapel of the counts of Blois, the façade of which almost harmonizes with the architecture of the dwelling of Louis XII. No words can describe the majestic solidity of those three structures, and, notwithstanding the lack of uniformity in the decorations, royalty, mighty and unyielding, demonstrating the magnitude of its fears by the magnitude of its precautions, served as a connecting link between those three buildings of entirely different types, two of which were built against the enormous hall of the States-General, vast and lofty as a church. Certainly, neither the simplicity nor the strength of the bourgeois existences which are described at the beginning of this narrative, and in which art was always represented, was lacking in that royal abode. Blois was the fruitful and shining theme to which bourgeoisie and feudality, money and nobility, made so many living rejoinders in town and country. You would not have had the residence of the prince who reigned over Paris in the sixteenth century changed in any respect. The splendor of seignorial apparel,

the magnificent costumes of women, must have harmonized admirably with the apparel of those curiously carved stones. As the King of France ascended the marvellous staircase of his château of Blois, from each floor he could see more and more of that noble Loire which brought him news from his whole kingdom, which it divided into two *confronting* and semi-rival portions. If François I., instead of building Chambord in a sterile, gloomy plain two leagues away, had built it at right angles to the château, on the space then occupied by the gardens upon which Gaston afterward built his palace, Versailles would never have been heard of, and Blois would necessarily have been the capital of France. Four Valois and Catherine de' Medici lavished their treasures on the château of François I. at Blois; but how can one fail to realize how lavish the crown must have been there, as he gazes with admiration at the massive partition-walls, the spinal column of the château, which contain deep recesses and secret stairways and cabinets, and which enclose halls as vast as the Salle de Conseil or Salle des Gardes, and royal apartments in which, in our day, a company of infantry is easily accommodated ?

Even if the visitor should not realize at once that the marvels within corresponded to the marvels without, the remains of Catherine de' Medici's cabinet, into which Christophe was soon to be ushered, would sufficiently attest the refined character of the art which peopled those apartments with life-like designs, in which salamanders gleamed among

the flowers, and the palette of the sixteenth century illumined the darkest corners with its most brilliant coloring. In this cabinet the observer can find to this day traces of the taste for gilding which Catherine brought from Italy, for the princesses of her family, to employ the delightful expression of the author already quoted, loved to veneer the French château with the gold amassed in trade by their ancestors, and they left the signature of their wealth on the walls of the royal apartments.

The queen-mother occupied the apartments on the first floor formerly occupied by Queen Claude of France, wife of François I., where may still be seen the two delicately carved C's surrounded by swans and lilies of spotless whiteness, signifying *Candidior candidis*,—whiter than the whitest,—the device of that queen, whose name, like Catherine's, began with a C ; a device which may be as fittingly applied to the mother of the last Valois kings as to the daughter of Louis XII.; for, notwithstanding the virulence of Calvinist slanders, no breath of suspicion has ever tarnished Catherine de' Medici's loyalty to Henri II.

Of course, the queen-mother, two of her children being still quite young,—he who was afterward the Duc d'Alençon, and Marguerite, wife of Henri IV., whom Charles IX. called Margot,—required all of the first floor.

King François II. and Queen Mary Stuart occupied the royal apartments on the second floor, formerly occupied by François I. and subsequently by

Henri III. The royal suite, like that occupied by the queen-mother, is divided into two parts, from end to end of the château, by the famous partition wall, about four feet thick, against which rest the other massive walls which separate the different rooms. Thus, on the first and second floors alike, the suites contain two distinct halves. The half looking to the south, on the courtyard, was given over to reception-rooms and rooms for the transaction of public affairs; whereas, to avoid the heat, the sleeping apartments were distributed through the portion looking toward the north, with the superb façade embellished with balconies and galleries, and overlooking the open fields of the Vendomois, the Perchoir aux Bretons, and the moats of the town—the only side of which our great fabulist La Fontaine speaks.

The château of François I. was at that time terminated by an immense unfinished tower which was to have formed the apex of the colossal angle which the palace would have described when the other projected wing was built; Gaston afterward dug into the tower in order to weld his palace to it; but he did not finish his work, and the tower has always remained in ruins. According to popular tradition, that royal keep was used as a prison or dungeon at the time of which we write. What poet, as he wanders to-day through the halls of that magnificent château, so precious to art and to history, can avoid innumerable regrets, for art and for France, when he sees the lovely arabesques of Catherine's

cabinet *whitewashed* and almost destroyed by the orders of the commandant of the barracks—that royal abode is now a barrack!—at the time of the cholera. The wainscoting of Catherine de' Medici's cabinet, of which we shall soon have something more to say, is the last relic of the sumptuous furnishings accumulated by five artist kings. As we wander through that labyrinth of bedrooms, halls, staircases, and towers, we can say to ourselves with awful certainty: "Here Mary Stuart cajoled her husband for the benefit of the Guises. There the Guises insulted Catherine. Later, on this spot, the second Balafré fell beneath the blows of the avengers of the crown. A century earlier, Louis XII. beckoned from this window to Cardinal d'Amboise, his friend. From this balcony, d'Epernon, Ravaillac's accomplice, greeted Queen Marie de' Medici, who knew, it was said, of the projected regicide and allowed it to be committed!"—In the chapel where the betrothal of Henri IV. and Marguerite de Valois was celebrated, the only remnant of the château of the counts of Blois, the shoes for the regiment are made to-day. That marvellous edifice, in which so many styles of architecture are typified, where such momentous deeds have been performed, is in a state of dilapidation which is a disgrace to France. How it pains those who love the monuments of ancient France to know that ere long those eloquent stones will share the fate of the corner of Rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie: it may be that they no longer exist save in these pages!

It is necessary to call attention to the fact that,

although the Guises had a palace of their own in the town of Blois,—it is still in existence, by the way,—they had obtained permission, in order to keep a closer watch upon the court, to live above the apartments of King Louis XII., in the quarters under the eaves which the Duchesse de Nemours was to occupy at a later period.

Young François II. and his young queen Mary Stuart, wildly in love with each other, like the children of sixteen that they were, had been unceremoniously transported, in the middle of winter, from the château of Saint-Germain, which seemed to the Duc de Guise too readily open to surprise, to the sort of fortress which the château of Blois then was, being isolated on three sides by precipices, while the fourth side was exceedingly well protected. The Guises, who were the queen's uncles, had stronger reasons than the one given for not living in Paris, and for keeping the court in a château whose walls could easily be watched and defended. A conflict was in progress about the throne, between the House of Lorraine and the House of Valois, a conflict which was not ended until the day, twenty-eight years later, in 1588, when Henri III., in that same château, under the very eyes of his mother, who was at that moment profoundly humiliated by the Lorraines, heard the fall of the boldest of all the Guises, the second Balafré, son of the first Balafré, by whom Catherine de' Medici was, at the time this narrative opens, being played with, imprisoned, closely watched, and threatened.

For this noble château of Blois was to Catherine the most cramped of prisons. On the death of her husband, by whom she had been held in leash, she had hoped to reign; but she found herself, on the contrary, practically held in bondage by strangers whose polished manners were immeasurably more brutal than those of a jailer. Nothing that she did could be kept secret. Those of her women who were devoted to her either had lovers who were devoted to the Guises or had Argus-eyed spies about them. Indeed, in those days, the play of passions presented the strange effects which will always result from the antagonism of two powerful opposing interests in the State. Gallantry, which served Catherine so well, was also one of the instruments employed by the Guises. For instance, the Prince de Condé, the first leader of the Reformation, was the lover of the Maréchale de Saint-André, whose husband was the grand master's *âme damnée*. The cardinal, persuaded by the affair of the Vidame de Chartres that Catherine was unconquered rather than unconquerable, was paying his court to her. Thus the play of all the passions strangely complicated the game of politics, making of it a sort of double game of chess, in which it was necessary to watch both the head and the heart of a man to make sure that, in an emergency, one would not overrule the other.

Although Catherine was constantly confronted by the Cardinal de Lorraine or by Duc François de Guise, who distrusted her, her most bitter and cleverest enemy was her daughter-in-law, Queen Mary,

a little blonde, mischievous as a soubrette, proud as a Stuart who wore three crowns, well-informed as an old scholar, sly as a boarding-school miss, in love with her husband as a courtesan is with her lover, devoted to her uncles, whom she admired, and delighted to find that King François, assisted by her suggestions, shared her good opinion of them. A mother-in-law is always a person whom a daughter-in-law does not adore, especially when she has worn the crown and wishes to retain it, a wish which the imprudent Catherine had not taken sufficient pains to conceal. Even her former situation, when Diane de Poitiers reigned over Henri II., was more endurable: then she received at least the honors due to a queen and the respect of the court; whereas, at this moment, the duke and the cardinal, who had none but their creatures about them, seemed to take pleasure in humiliating her. Catherine, beset by courtiers, received, not daily, but hourly, affronts which wounded her self-esteem; for the Guises were determined to continue with her the system of treatment which the late king had adopted.

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The thirty-six years of disasters which devastated France may be said to have begun with the scene in which the furrier's son had been assigned the most perilous of rôles, and which makes him the principal figure in this Study. The peril into which that zealous reformer was about to fall became flagrant on the very morning when he left the pier at Beaugency, entrusted with valuable documents which compromised the most exalted heads among the nobility, and set sail for Blois, accompanied by a crafty partisan, the indefatigable La Renaudie, who was at the pier before him.

While the boat on which Christophe had embarked floated down the river, impelled by a gentle east wind, the famous Cardinal Charles de Lorraine and the second Duc de Guise, one of the greatest warriors of that age, were contemplating their position, like two eagles on the summit of a cliff, and looking prudently about them before striking the great blow by which they tried to kill the Reformation once and for all, at Amboise, and which was repeated in Paris twelve years later, on the 24th of August, 1572.

During the night, three noblemen who played prominent parts in the twelve years' drama which followed this double conspiracy, plotted by the Guises and by the Reformers alike, had arrived at

the château, riding at full speed, and had left their horses half-dead at the postern, which was guarded by officers and soldiers absolutely devoted to the Duc de Guise, the idol of all men of war.

A word concerning that great man—a word to tell us, first of all, how he was situated at that moment.

His mother was Antoinette de Bourbon, grandaunt of Henri IV. Of how little account is blood relationship! at that moment he was aiming at the head of his cousin the Prince de Condé. Mary Stuart was his niece. His wife was Anne, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara. The great Constable Anne de Montmorency addressed the Duc de Guise when he wrote him as "Monseigneur," as he would address a king, and concluded: "Your very humble servant."—Guise, grand master of the king's household, replying to him, wrote: "Monsieur le Connétable," and signed as he would sign a communication to the Parliament: "Your very good friend."

As for the cardinal, who was known as the *Transalpine Pope*, and whom Estienne calls "His Holiness," he had the whole monastic portion of the Church in France at his service, and dealt with the Holy Father as an equal. Vain of his eloquence, he was one of the subtlest theologians of his time and maintained a close watch upon France and Italy at once by means of three religious orders which were absolutely devoted to him, travelled for him day and night, and acted as his spies and advisers.

These few words will explain to what great power

the cardinal and the duke had attained. Despite their wealth and the revenues of their offices, they were so entirely disinterested or so irresistibly borne on by the current of politics, so generous, too, that both of them were in debt, doubtless after Cæsar's fashion. So, when Henri III. procured the death of the second Balafré, whose life was a constant menace to him, the House of Guise was necessarily ruined. The money expended in a century for the purpose of seizing the crown explains the abasement of this family under Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. at the time when Madame's* sudden death made known to all Europe to what an infamous rôle a Chevalier de Lorraine had descended.

Claiming to be heirs of the dethroned Carlovingians, the duke and the cardinal treated Catherine de' Medici, their niece's mother-in-law, with the utmost insolence. The Duchesse de Guise spared Catherine no mortification. She was a D'Este, and Catherine was a Medici, the descendant of parvenu Florentine tradesmen, whom the sovereigns of Europe had not as yet admitted into their royal brotherhood. For that reason, François I. had looked upon his son's marriage with a Medici as a *mésalliance*, and had permitted it only because he did not think that that son would ever be dauphin. Hence his frantic rage when the dauphin was poisoned by the Florentine Montecuculli. The D'Estes declined to

* Henrietta of England, daughter of Charles I., and first wife of Philip, Duc d'Orleans, brother of Louis XIV. She is supposed to have been poisoned by the Chevalier de Lorraine.

recognize the Medicis as Italian princes. Those sometime tradesmen were, in fact, trying to solve the impossible problem—how to maintain a throne encompassed by republican institutions. Not until long after, did Philip II. of Spain accord the title of grand duke to the Medicis, who purchased it by betraying France, their benefactress, and by a servile attachment to the court of Spain, which secretly thwarted their plans in Italy.

"Caress your enemies only!"—That profound remark of Catherine's seems to have been the political gospel of that family of tradesmen, which did not lack great men until the moment when its destiny became great, and which underwent a little too soon that degeneration which finally overtakes royal races and great families.

For three generations there had been a Lorraine warrior and a Lorraine churchman; and, what may appear even more extraordinary, all the churchmen, including Cardinal Charles, bore a strong facial resemblance to Ximenes, whom Cardinal de Richelieu also resembled. These five cardinals all had cunning and at the same time awe-inspiring faces; whereas the warriors' faces were of the Basque mountaineer type, which is also recognizable in Henri IV.; but both father and son bore scars which did not deprive them of the charm and affability of expression by which they won the hearts of their soldiers no less than by their great courage.

It may be useful to tell how and where the grand master received that wound, for it was cured by the

daring skill of one of the characters in this drama, Ambroise Paré, to whom we have referred as being indebted to the syndic of the guild of furriers. At the siege of Calais, the duke's face was pierced from side to side by a lance-thrust; the head of the weapon entered the cheek below the right eye, emerged at the back of the neck below the left ear, and remained in the wound. The duke lay in his tent, amid general dismay, and would have died but for the bold action and the unhesitating devotion of Ambroise Paré.

"The duke is not dead, messieurs," said Ambroise, looking about at the weeping attendants; "but he will die ere long," he continued, "unless I dare to treat him as already dead, and I am going to venture, at the risk of whatever may happen to me. Look!"

He placed his left foot on the duke's chest, seized the wooden shaft of the lance in his fingers, slowly worked it back and forth, and at last drew it from the duke's head, as if he were dealing with a thing, not a man. Although he cured the prince by his audacious treatment, he could not do away with the horrible scar which gave rise to his sobriquet.* For a like reason, the same sobriquet was given to his son.

Being absolute masters of King François II., over whom his wife held sway by virtue of a passionate mutual love of which they knew how to take advantage, the two great Lorraine princes really ruled

* *Le Balafré*, the Scarred

France, and had no other foe at court than Catherine de' Medici. Never did politicians play a more wary game.

The respective positions of the ambitious widow of Henri II. and of the ambitious House of Lorraine were well exemplified by the places they occupied on the terrace of the château during the morning when Christophe was to arrive. The queen-mother, who affected a very warm attachment to the Guises, had asked to be informed of the news brought by the three noblemen who had arrived from different parts of the kingdom; but she had the mortification of being politely dismissed by the cardinal. She was walking at the end of the gardens, toward the Loire, where she was building, for her astrologer Ruggieri, an observatory which can still be seen, and from which one may overlook the whole of that lovely valley. The two Lorraines were at the opposite end, which overlooked the Vendomois, and from which one could see the upper part of the town, the Perchoir aux Bretons, and the postern of the château. Catherine had deceived the two brothers and hoodwinked them by her feigned dissatisfaction, for she was really very glad of an opportunity to speak with one of the three men who had arrived in such haste, her secret confidant, who was boldly playing a double game, for which, however, he was certainly well rewarded. This nobleman was Chiverni, apparently a devoted servant of the Cardinal de Lorraine, in reality a devoted servant of Catherine. Catherine also had two faithful retainers in the

Gondis, her creatures; but those two Florentines were the object of too much suspicion on the part of the Guises for her to send them abroad; so she kept them at court, where their every word and act were watched, but where they also watched the Guises and advised Catherine. There was another Italian named Birague whom the two Gondis held firm in his allegiance to the queen; he was a cunning Piedmontese, who pretended, like Chiverni, to have abandoned the queen-mother for the Guises, and who encouraged them in their undertakings while acting as a spy upon them for Catherine's benefit. Chiverni had come from Ecouen and Paris. The last to arrive was Saint-André, who was a marshal of France, and who became so great a personage that the Guises, whose creature he was, took him for the third member of the triumvirate which they formed in the following year against Catherine. Before them came the man who built the château of Duretal, Vieilleville, who was also made a marshal for his devotion to the Guises; he had arrived secretly, departed again even more secretly, and no one had penetrated the secret of the mission which the grand master had entrusted to him. Saint-André had been instructed to take certain military measures intended to attract all the reformers under arms to Amboise, as the result of a conference held by the Cardinal de Lorraine, the Duc de Guise, Chiverni, Birague, Vieilleville, and Saint-André. As the two chiefs of the House of Lorraine chose to employ Birague, it is to be supposed

that they were confident of their ground, for they knew that he was in the queen-mother's service; but it may be that they kept him at hand in order to penetrate their rival's secret designs,—that is to say, for the same reason that she left him with them. At that interesting epoch, the double rôle played by some politicians was well known to both of the parties which employed them, and they were like cards in the hands of gamblers; the game was won by the shrewdest player. During the conference, the brothers had maintained an impenetrable reserve. Catherine's conversation with her friends will explain fully the object of that council held by the Guises in the open air, at daybreak, in those hanging gardens, as if they were all afraid to speak between the walls of the château of Blois.

The queen-mother, who, on the pretext of examining the observatory which was being constructed for her astrologer, had been walking in the garden since early morning with the two Gondis, watching the hostile group with an anxious and inquisitive eye, was joined by Chiverni. She was at the corner of the terrace toward the Church of Saint-Nicholas, and there she need fear no eavesdropping. The wall is on the level of the church-towers, and the Guises were still taking counsel together at the other corner of the terrace, by the foot of the unfinished keep, walking back and forth from the Perchoir aux Bretons to the gallery by the bridge connecting the garden, the gallery, and the perchoir. No one was in the chasm which separated the two

groups. Chiverni raised the queen-mother's hand to kiss it, and slipped into it a little note, unseen by the two Italians. Catherine hastily turned away, walked to the corner of the parapet, and read these words:

"You are powerful enough to hold the balance between the great nobles, and make them contend with one another as to who shall serve you best; you have a family of kings, and you have no reason to fear either Lorraines or Bourbons if you set them against one another; for they are equally desirous to steal the crown from your children. Be the mistress, not the slave, of your advisers; hold one party in check by the other; otherwise the kingdom will go from bad to worse, and bloody wars may be the result.

"L'HÔPITAL."

The queen put the paper in her bosom, proposing to burn it as soon as she should be alone.

"When did you see him?" she asked Chiverni.

"On returning from a visit to the constable at Melun, which place he passed through with Madame la Duchesse de Berri, whom he was very impatient to deposit safely in Savoie, before returning here to enlighten Chancellor Olivier, who, by the way, is hoodwinked by the Lorraines. Monsieur de l'Hôpital has decided to espouse your cause because he sees the goal toward which Messieurs de Guise are tending. So that he proposes to return with the utmost haste in order to give you his vote in the council."

"Is he sincere?" queried Catherine. "The Lorraines put him into the council, you know, and it must have been to help them control matters there."

"L'Hôpital is a Frenchman of too good stock not to be honest," said Chiverni; "at all events, his note is a sufficiently binding engagement."

"What is the constable's reply to these Lorraines?"

"He says that he is the king's servant and will await his orders. Upon that reply, the cardinal, to forestall all resistance, will propose that his brother be appointed lieutenant-general of the kingdom."

"Already!" exclaimed Catherine, in dismay. "Well, did Monsieur de l'Hôpital give you any other advice for me?"

"He said to me that you alone, madame, could stand between the crown and Messieurs de Guise."

"But does he think that I can use the Huguenots as *chevaux de frise?*"

"Ah! madame," cried Chiverni, surprised at such perspicacity, "we had no thought of plunging you into such difficulties."

"Did he know what my present position is?" asked the queen, calmly.

"Very nearly. He considers that you made a fool's bargain when, at the late king's death, you accepted for your share the bribe of Madame Diane's ruin. Messieurs de Guise thought they had avoided all obligation to the queen by gratifying the woman."

"Yes," said the queen, glancing at the two Gondis, "I made a great blunder then."

"Such a blunder as the gods make!" rejoined Charles de Gondi.

"Messieurs," said the queen, "if I go over openly to the reformers, I shall become the slave of a party."

"Madame," replied Chiverni, eagerly, "I entirely agree with you; you must make them serve you, not you them."

"Although, for the moment, they are your surest reliance," said Charles de Gondi, "we do not close our eyes to the fact that success and defeat with their support are equally perilous."

"I know it!" said the queen. "A single false step will be instantly seized upon by the Guises as a pretext to get rid of me!"

"The niece of a Pope, the mother of four Valois, a queen of France, the widow of the most zealous persecutor of the Huguenots, an Italian Catholic, the aunt of Leo X.,—can such a one form an alliance with the Reformation?" queried Charles de Gondi.

"But if we do not resist the Guises, do we not lend our hands to an act of usurpation?" replied Albert. "You have to deal with a family which sees an opportunity to snatch a crown in the struggle between Catholicism and the Reformed religion. We can accept the support of the reformers without abjuring our faith."

"Consider, madame, that your own family, which should be entirely in the interest of the King of France, is the slave of the King of Spain!" said Chiverni. "It would be for the Reformation tomorrow if the Reformation could make the Duke of Florence a king."

"I am quite disposed to lend a hand for a moment to the Huguenots," said Catherine, "if for no other purpose than to be revenged on that soldier, that priest, and that woman!"

She indicated one after another, with a genuine Italian's glance, the duke, the cardinal, and the floor of the château on which were the apartments of her son and Mary Stuart.

"That trio has taken the reins of State from my hands, for which I waited so long and which that old hag held in my stead," she added.

She nodded her head in the direction of the Loire, toward Chenonceaux, the château which she had taken from Diane de Poitiers in exchange for Chaumont.

"*Ma*," she said in Italian, "it seems that the ruffed gentry at Geneva are not clever enough to apply to me!—By my conscience, I cannot go to them. Not one of you could venture to carry a message to them."

She stamped on the ground.

"I hoped that you could have met the hunchback at Ecouen; he has some brains in his head," she said to Chiverni.

"He was there, madame; but he could not succeed in persuading the constable to make common cause with him. Monsieur de Montmorency is willing enough to overthrow the Guises, who were responsible for his disgrace, but he will do nothing to aid heresy."

"Messieurs, who will crush these individual wills

which embarrass the designs of royalty? Great God! we must make these great men destroy one another, as was done by Louis XI., the greatest of your kings. There are four or five parties in this kingdom, and my children's party is the weakest of them all."

"The Reformation is an idea," said Charles de Gondi, "and the parties that Louis XI. crushed were held together only by interest."

"There are always ideas behind interests," rejoined Chiverni. "Under Louis XI., the idea was called the great fiefs."

"Use heresy as an axe!" said Albert de Gondi; "you will not incur the odium of executions."

"But," cried the queen, "I know nothing of the resources or the plans of these people, I have no reliable method of communicating with them. If I were surprised in any machination of this sort, either by the queen, who follows me with her eyes like a child in the cradle, or by her two jailers, who allow no one to enter the château, I should be banished from the kingdom and sent back to Florence with a terrible escort, commanded by some fanatical Guisard! Thanks, my friends.—Ah! my daughter-in-law, I trust that you will some day be a prisoner in your own house, then you will know how you have made me suffer!"

"The grand master and the cardinal know all their plans," exclaimed Chiverni; "but those two foxes will not tell them. Find a way, madame, to make them tell what they know, and I will sacrifice

myself for you by coming to terms with the Prince de Condé."

"Which of their own plans were those men unable to conceal from you?" asked the queen, pointing to the two brothers.

"Monsieur de Vieilleville and Monsieur de Saint-André have received orders of which we know nothing; but it seems that the grand master is concentrating his best troops on the left bank. Within a few days you will be at Amboise. The grand master came to this terrace to examine the lay of the land, and does not consider Blois favorably situated for the execution of his secret plans. Now, what can he possibly want?" said Chiverni, pointing to the precipices by which the château is surrounded. "The court can be no more secure from a sudden attack anywhere on earth than in this place."

"Abdicate or reign!" exclaimed Albert in the ear of the queen, who was lost in thought.

A terrible expression of inward rage passed over her beautiful ivory-white face; she was not yet forty years old, and had lived twenty-six years at the court of France, without a shadow of power—she who had determined, immediately on her arrival, to play the leading part. This horrifying sentence came from her lips, in the language of Dante:

"No hope so long as that boy lives!—his little wife bewitches him," she added, after a pause.

Catherine's exclamation was inspired by the strange prediction which had been made to her a few days before at the château of Chaumont, on the

opposite bank of the Loire, whither she had gone with her astrologer Ruggieri to consult, as to the lives of her four sons, a celebrated soothsayer secretly brought thither by Nostradamus, the most prominent of the physicians who, in the great sixteenth century, clung to the occult sciences, like Ruggieri, Cardan, Paracelsus, and so many others. This woman, whose life has escaped the notice of historians, fixed the reign of François II. at one year.

"What is your advice touching this matter?" Catherine asked Chiverni.

"We shall have a battle," said the prudent gentleman. "The King of Navarre—"

"Oh! say the queen!" interposed Catherine.

"Of course, the queen," said Chiverni, with a smile, "has given the reformers for a leader the Prince de Condé, who, being a young son, can risk anything; and Monsieur le Cardinal talks of writing him to come here."

"Let him come," cried the queen, "and I am saved!"

It will be seen that the leaders of the great movement of the Reformation in France had rightly divined an ally in Catherine.

"It's an amusing thing," observed the queen, "that the Bourbons are playing with the Huguenots, and that Messieurs Calvin, de Bèze, and others are playing with the Bourbons; but shall we be cunning enough to play with Huguenots, Bourbons, and Guises? In face of three such enemies, we may be excused for weighing our powers!" she said.

"They have not the king," rejoined Albert, "and you will always triumph while you have the king on your side."

"*Maladetta Maria!*" said Catherine, between her teeth.

"The Lorraines are already thinking of robbing you of the affections of the bourgeoisie," said Birague.

The hope of obtaining the crown was not the result of any premeditated plan formed by the two chiefs of the turbulent Guise family; there was nothing to justify any such plan or any such hope, and their audacity was the result of circumstances. The two cardinals and the two Balafrés were four ambitious men superior in talent to all the politicians who surrounded them. So that the family was not crushed until it came in collision with Henri IV., a rebel, who was reared in that great school of which Catherine and the Guises were the masters, and who made the most of all their lessons.

At the time of which we write, these two men found themselves in the position of arbiters of the greatest revolution attempted in Europe since that of Henry VIII. in England,—a revolution which resulted from the invention of the printing-press. Enemies of the Reformation, they held supreme power in their hands and determined to stifle the heresy; but Calvin, their adversary, although less famous than Luther, was a stronger man than Luther. Calvin saw government where Luther had seen only dogma. Where the corpulent beer-drinker,

the famous German, fought with the devil and threw his inkstand in his face, the Picard, a sickly celibate, formed plans of campaign, managed battles, furnished princes with weapons, and aroused whole nations to action by sowing republican doctrines in the hearts of the bourgeoisie, in order to make up for his constant reverses on the battle-field by fresh progress in the minds of his fellow-men.

The Cardinal de Lorraine and the Duc de Guise knew as well as Philip II. and the Duke of Alva where the monarchy was aimed at, and how closely Catholicism and royalty were bound together. Charles V., drunk from having quaffed too freely from Charlemagne's cup, and relying too much on the strength of his monarchy in fancying that he could share the whole world with Suleiman, did not realize at first that his head was attacked; and when Cardinal Granvelle pointed out to him the extent of the wound, he abdicated. The Guises had but one thought, to stamp out the heresy with a single blow. That blow they attempted first, at this time, at Amboise, and they caused it to be attempted a second time on Saint-Bartholomew's day, acting then in accord with Catherine de' Medici, whose eyes had been opened by the flames of twelve years of war, and above all by the significant word *republic*, subsequently uttered and printed by the writers of the Reformed sect, whom Lecamus, that typical specimen of the Parisian bourgeoisie, had already fathomed in that respect.

The two princes, on the point of dealing a deadly

blow at the heart of the nobility, in order to sever it at one stroke from a religious faction in whose triumph it would lose everything, were finishing their consultation as to the method they should adopt of disclosing their projected *coup d'Etat* to the king, while Catherine was talking with her four advisers.

"Jeanne d'Albret knew very well what she was doing when she declared herself the patroness of the Huguenots! She has in the Reformation a battering-ram which she handles extremely well!" said the grand master, who realized the far-reaching character of the Queen of Navarre's plans.

Jeanne d'Albret was, in very truth, one of the shrewdest minds of that age.

"Théodore de Bèze is at Nérac, after visiting Calvin to receive his orders."

"What men these bourgeois do succeed in finding!" cried the grand master.

"Ah! we have not a man on our side like that La Renaudie," exclaimed the cardinal; "he is a genuine Catiline."

"Such men always act for their own interest," the duke replied. "Did I not appreciate La Renaudie? I overwhelmed him with favors, I helped him to escape at the time of his condemnation by the Parliament of Bourgogne, I enabled him to return to France by obtaining a revision of his prosecution, and I intended to do everything in my power for him, while he was concocting a devilish conspiracy against us. The knave has rallied the Protestants

of Germany to the support of the heretics of France by smoothing away the difficulties in the matter of dogma that had arisen between Luther and Calvin. He has rallied the discontented great noblemen to the cause of the Reformation without requiring them to abjure Catholicism openly. Last year he had thirty captains under his orders! He was everywhere at once, at Lyon, in Languedoc, at Nantes! And he has had reduced to writing and distributed throughout Germany the report of a consultation in which the theologians declare that it is justifiable to resort to force to rescue the king from our domination; and it is now circulating from town to town. We look for him everywhere, but we can never find him! And yet I have never shown him anything but kindness! We must either kill him like a dog, or try to build him a bridge of gold by which he can be induced to enter our family."

"Bretagne, Languedoc, the whole kingdom is being worked upon to make a deadly assault upon us," said the cardinal. "After yesterday's fête, I passed the rest of the night reading all the information which my monks have sent me; but nobody is compromised except impoverished noblemen, mechanics, people as to whom it makes no difference whether we hang them or let them live. The Colignys and Condés do not appear as yet, although they hold the threads of this conspiracy."

"For that reason," said the duke, "as soon as that lawyer, that Avenelles, sold us the secret, I bade Braguelonne let the conspirators go on to the

end; they are unsuspicious, they expect to surprise us, and perhaps the leaders will show themselves then. My advice would be to allow ourselves to be beaten for about forty-eight hours—"

"That would be half an hour too long!" exclaimed the cardinal, in alarm.

"What a brave fellow you are!" retorted Le Balafré.

The cardinal rejoined, unmoved:

"Whether the Prince de Condé is compromised or not, if we are sure that he is their leader, let us strike him down, and then we shall be secure. We do not need soldiers so much as judges for this task, and we shall never lack judges. Victory is always more certain in parliament than on the battle-field and costs less."

"I am perfectly willing," replied the duke; "but do you think that the Prince de Condé is powerful enough to inspire so much audacity in these people who are coming to strike this first blow at us? is it not—"

"The King of Navarre," said the cardinal.

"A simpleton who takes off his hat when he speaks to me!" replied the duke. "Can it be that the Florentine's coquetries have obscured your sight?"

"Oh! I know what I am about," said the priest. "My only purpose in seeking an intrigue with her is to be able to read in the depths of her heart."

"She has no heart," said the duke, quickly, "she is even more ambitious than we are."

"You are a gallant captain," said the cardinal to his brother, "but, believe me, I am not very far behind you, and I set Mary to watch her before you ever dreamed of suspecting her. Catherine is no more religious than my shoe. If she is not the soul of the conspiracy, it is not for lack of inclination; but we shall have an opportunity to judge her when the test comes, and to see how well she supports us. Thus far I am perfectly certain that she has had absolutely no communication with the heretics."

"It is time to disclose the whole plot to the king, and to the queen-mother who is supposed to know nothing about it," said the duke; "and that is the only proof of her innocence; perhaps they are waiting until the last moment, to dazzle her by the probabilities of success. La Renaudie will soon know by my arrangements that we are warned. Last night, Nemours was to follow the detachments of conspirators who are on their way hither by the by-roads, and they will be compelled to attack us at Amboise, where I shall let them all in. Here," he said, pointing to three sides of the cliff on which the château of Blois is built, as Chiverni had just done, "we should have an assault with no result, the Huguenots could come and go at will. Blois is a hall with four entrances, whereas Amboise is a bag."

"I will not leave the Florentine," said the cardinal.

"We have made a mistake," rejoined the duke, amusing himself by tossing his dagger in the air and catching it by the hilt; "we must adopt the same

plan with her as with the reformers, give her full liberty of movement in order to catch her in the act."

The cardinal looked at his brother a moment, and shook his head.

"What does Pardaillan want?" said the grand master, as he saw coming toward them on the terrace the young nobleman who became celebrated by reason of his meeting with La Renaudie, in which they both lost their lives.

"Monseigneur, a man sent hither by the queen's furrier is at the gate, and says that he has an ermine garment to deliver to her; shall he be admitted?"

"Oh! yes, a *surcot* that she mentioned yesterday," replied the cardinal; "admit the shopkeeping churl; she will need the *surcot* for the journey down the Loire."

"By what road did he come, that he was not challenged until he reached the gate of the château?" demanded the grand master.

"I do not know," Pardaillan replied.

"I will ask him the question in the queen's presence," said Le Balafré to himself.—"Let him await the morning reception in the *salle des gardes*," he added, aloud. "By the way, Pardaillan, is he young?"

"Yes, monseigneur; he claims to be Lecamus's son."

"Lecamus is a good Catholic," said the cardinal, who, like the grand master, was blessed with Cæsar's memory. "The curé of Saint-Pierre aux

Bœufs relies upon him, for he is *quartenier* at the palace."

"Nevertheless, allow the son to *talk* with the captain of the Scottish Guard," said the grand master, emphasizing the verb in such a way as to give it a meaning easy to understand. "But Ambroise is in the château; we can learn from him if the knave is really the son of Lecamus, who assisted him very materially long ago. Ask Ambroise Paré."

It was at this moment that Queen Catherine came forward alone toward the two brothers, who made haste to go to meet her, with manifestations of respect in which the Italian constantly detected an ironical meaning.

"Messieurs," said she, "will you deign to inform me as to what is going forward? Does your former master's widow hold a lower place in your esteem than Messieurs de Vieilleville, Birague, and Chiverni?"

"Madame," replied the cardinal, in a gallant tone, "our duty as men, taking precedence of our duty as politicians, is to avoid alarming the ladies by false rumors. But this morning there is occasion to confer upon affairs of State. You will excuse my brother for having begun by issuing certain purely military orders, with which it was unnecessary to trouble you: the important questions remain to be decided. If you please, we will attend the morning reception of the king and queen, as the hour draws near."

"What is the matter, Monsieur le Grand Maître?" said Catherine, affecting alarm.

"The Reformation, madame, is no longer a heresy simply, it is a party which is coming in arms to tear the king from you."

Thereupon Catherine, the cardinal, the duke, and the noblemen walked toward the staircase through the gallery, where the courtiers who had not the right of entry to the apartments hastily assembled and drew up in two lines.

Gondi, who had been watching the two Lorraine princes closely while Catherine was talking with them, whispered in good Tuscan in the queen-mother's ear these two words, which passed into a proverb, and which explain one aspect of that great royal character:

"*Odiate e aspettate!*"—Hate and wait.

*

Pardaillan, who had just given the order to the officer of the guard at the gate of the château to admit the clerk of the queen's furrier, found Christophe standing open-mouthed in front of the porch, gazing intently at the façade built by good King Louis XII., where, if we may judge by what still remains of it, the fantastic carvings were much more numerous than they are to-day. For instance, the curious observer will notice a woman's figure, carved in the capital of one of the columns of the doorway, with her dress pulled up, and laughingly showing

What Brunnel showed Marphise

to a stout monk crouching on the capital of the corresponding column on the other side of the framework of that door, above which at that time stood the statue of Louis XII. Several of the windows in that façade, carved in the same style,—which unfortunately have been destroyed,—amused, or seemed to amuse, Christophe, upon whom the arquebusiers of the guard were already showering jocose remarks.

"This fellow would find very comfortable quarters there," said the subaltern on duty, patting the charges for his arquebus which were all prepared in the shape of sugar-loaves and slung from his baldrick.

"I say, Parisian," said a soldier, "you never saw so many of 'em, did you?"

"He recognizes good King Louis XII.," said another.

Christophe pretended not to hear, and did his utmost to exaggerate his feigned amazement, and his foolish attitude in front of the guard-house was an excellent passport in Pardaillan's eyes.

"The queen has not risen," said the young captain; "come and wait for her in the *salle des gardes*."

Christophe slowly followed Pardaillan. He lingered to admire the graceful arched gallery where, in the reign of Louis XII., the courtiers awaited the reception-hour under cover when the weather was bad, and where there were, at that moment, several noblemen of the party of the Guises; for the staircase which led to their apartments, extremely well preserved to this day, is at the end of that gallery in a tower of a style of architecture well adapted to arouse the admiration of beholders.

"Well, did you come here to study image-carving?" cried Pardaillan, as he saw Lecamus standing in front of the dainty carvings of the outer balconies which connect, or, if you prefer, separate, the columns of each arch.

Christophe followed the young captain toward the staircase of honor, not without casting an enraptured glance at that quasi-Moorish tower. On that lovely morning the courtyard was full of orderlies, and noblemen talking in groups, their gorgeous costumes

giving animation to the spot, which the architectural marvels carved on the still-new façade made so brilliant in itself.

"Come in here," said Pardaillan to Lecamus, motioning to him to follow through a carved wooden door on the second floor, which was thrown open by the soldier on guard when he recognized Pardaillan.

Christophe's amazement can be imagined when he entered that *salle des gardes*, which was of such immense size that the military authorities of the present day have cut it in two by a partition through the centre; it actually occupied a third of the whole courtyard façade in the king's suite on the second floor, as well as on the first floor in the queen-mother's; it was lighted by two windows at the right and two at the left of the tower containing the famous spiral stairway. The young captain walked toward the door of the bedroom occupied by the king and queen, which opened into that vast hall, and bade one of the two pages on duty inform Madame Dayelle, one of the queen's women, that the furrier was in the hall with her *surcots*.

At a gesture from Pardaillan, Christophe took his place beside an officer seated on a stool at the corner of a fireplace as large as his father's shop, which was at one end of that vast hall, facing one precisely like it at the other end. He fell into conversation with this officer, and eventually aroused his interest by telling him of the wretched condition of trade. Christophe made himself appear such a genuine

tradesman that the officer was convinced, and imparted his conviction to the captain of the Scottish Guard, who came up from the courtyard to question Christophe, and who scrutinized him stealthily and with care.

Although fully warned of his perilous position, Christophe Lecamus could not comprehend the cold-blooded ferocity of the selfish interests among which Chaudieu had thrust him. To an observer who knew the secret of that scene, as the historian knows it to-day, there would have been abundant cause for trembling at the spectacle of that young man, the hope of two families, risking his life between those two powerful and pitiless machines, Catherine and the Guises. Are there many men of true courage who measure the extent of the risks they run? From the way in which the port of Blois, the town and the château were guarded, Christophe expected to find snares and spies everywhere, so he had resolved to conceal the momentous nature of his mission and the tension of his faculties behind the foolish and commercial exterior which he had just exhibited to young Pardaillan, to the officer of the guard, and to the captain.

The commotion which accompanies the hour of the morning reception in a royal château was beginning to be apparent. The noblemen, whose horses and pages, or squires, remained in the outer courtyard of the château,—for no one, save the king and queen, was entitled to enter the inner courtyard mounted,—ascended the superb staircase in groups

and invaded the vast *salle des gardes* with its two fireplaces, where the great timbers are to-day despoiled of their decorations, where beggarly little red tiles replace the ingenious mosaics of the floor, but where the crown tapestries then concealed the massive walls, to-day whitewashed, and where the arts of that epoch, unique in the annals of mankind, shone resplendent.

Reformers and Catholics flocked thither to learn the news and to scrutinize faces, as much as to pay their court to the king. François II.'s excessive affection for Mary Stuart, which neither the Guises nor the queen-mother attempted to thwart, and the politic complaisance with which Mary Stuart welcomed it, deprived the king of all power; and so, although he was seventeen years old, he knew naught of royalty save its diversions, and naught of marriage save the delights of a first passion. In reality they all paid court to Queen Mary, to her uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine, and to the grand master.

This general movement took place before Christophe, who watched the arrival of each personage with a naturally eager curiosity. A magnificent portière, on each side of which stood two pages and two guards of the Scottish company, then on duty, marked the entrance to that royal bedroom, so fatal to the then grand master's son, the second Balafré, who breathed his last at the foot of the bed at this time occupied by Mary Stuart and François II. The queen's maids of honor were grouped near the

fireplace opposite to that by which Christophe was still *talking* with the captain of the guards. By its situation, that second fireplace was the *fireplace of honor*, for it was cut in the thick wall of the *salle du conseil*, between the door thereof and the door of the royal chamber, so that the maids of honor and those noblemen who were entitled to stand there were directly in the path of the king and queens. The courtiers were certain of seeing Catherine, for her maids of honor, in mourning like the whole court, came up from her apartments headed by the Comtesse de Fiesco, and took their places on the side of the *salle du conseil*, facing the young queen's ladies, led by the Duchesse de Guise, who occupied the opposite corner, toward the royal chamber. The courtiers left between the two groups of ladies, who belonged to the first families of the kingdom, a space of several yards, upon which the greatest noblemen alone had the right to encroach. The Comtesse de Fiesco and the Duchesse de Guise were, by virtue of the privilege pertaining to their offices, seated in the midst of these noble maidens, all of whom were standing.

One of the first men who ventured to approach these two formidable battalions was the Duc d'Orléans, the king's brother, who came down from his apartments on the floor above, accompanied by Monsieur de Cypierre, his governor. The young prince, who was destined to reign before the close of the year, under the name of Charles IX., was at this time ten years old and excessively bashful. The Duc

d'Anjou and the Duc d'Alençon, his two brothers, as well as the Princesse Marguerite, afterward the wife of Henri IV., were still too young to come to the court, and remained under their mother's charge in her apartments. The Duc d'Orléans, richly dressed, according to the prevailing fashion, in silk breeches, a cloth-of-gold doublet with black flowers, and a small embroidered velvet cloak,—all in black, for he was still in mourning for the king, his father,—saluted the two ladies of honor, and took his place near his mother's attendants. Already overflowing with antipathy for the House of Guise, he replied coldly to the duchess's words, and leaned on the back of the Comtesse de Fiesco's high chair. His governor, one of the noblest characters of that age, Monsieur de Cypierre, stood behind him like a shield. Amyot, in a simple abbé's cassock, also accompanied him; he was already his tutor, as well as the tutor of the other three princes, whose affection afterward proved to be so profitable to him.

Between the fireplace of honor and the one at the other end of the hall, where the guards and their captain were standing, with several courtiers, and Christophe with his box, Chancellor Olivier, L'Hôpital's patron and predecessor, dressed as chancellors of France have always dressed from that day to this, was walking to and fro with the Cardinal de Tournon, recently arrived from Rome, exchanging a few whispered sentences amid the general attention of the noblemen massed along the wall separating the

hall from the king's chamber, like living tapestry, in front of the superb tapestry with its thousands of figures. Notwithstanding the gravity of the occasion, the court presented the appearance which all courts present in all countries, at all times, amid the most imminent dangers: courtiers talking upon indifferent subjects and thinking of grave subjects, jesting as they scrutinize faces, and chattering about love and marriages with heiresses, amid the most appalling catastrophes.

"What did you think of yesterday's fête?" asked Bourdeilles, Seigneur de Brantôme, as he approached Mademoiselle de Piennes, one of the queen-mother's maids of honor.

"Messieurs du Baïf and du Bellay never have any but good ideas," she replied, pointing to the two organizers of the fête, who stood within a few steps.—"I thought it was in most execrable taste," she added in an undertone.

"Because you had no part in it?" queried Mademoiselle de Lewiston from the other side of the fireplace.

"What are you reading, madame?" Amyot asked Madame de Fiesco.

"*Amadis de Gaule, by Seigneur des Essarts, commissary-in-ordinary of the king's artillery.*"

"A charming book," said the lovely girl, who was afterward so famous under the name of La Fosseuse, when she became maid of honor to Queen Marguerite of Navarre.

"The style is quite new," said Amyot. "Do

you take up with these barbarisms?" he asked, addressing Brantôme.

"The ladies like them, what can we do?" replied Brantôme, as he went to pay his respects to Madame de Guise, who held in her hand Boccaccio's *Célèbres Dames*.—"There must be some ladies of your family in that book, madame," he said; "but Sieur Boccaccio made a mistake in not living in our day; he would have found material for expanding his volumes."

"How clever that Monsieur de Brantôme is!" said the fair Mademoiselle de Limeuil to the Comtesse de Fiesco; "he came to us first, but he will stay in the Guise quarter."

"Hush!" said Madame de Fiesco, looking sharply at the fair Limeuil. "Attend to your own affairs—"

The girl turned her eyes toward the door. She was awaiting Sardini, an Italian noble, to whom the queen-mother, her kinswoman, married her after the accident which happened to her in Catherine's own dressing-room, and to which she was indebted for the honor of having a queen for midwife.

"By Saint Alipantin, Mademoiselle Davila seems to me to grow lovelier every morning," said Monsieur de Robertet, secretary of State, saluting the queen-mother's group.

The arrival of the secretary of State, who looked precisely as a cabinet minister looks in our days, caused no sensation.

"If that is so, monsieur, pray lend me the libel against Messieurs de Guise," said Mademoiselle Davila to Robertet; "I know it has been lent to you."

"I no longer have it," replied the secretary, going to salute Madame de Guise.

"I have it," said the Comte de Grammont to Mademoiselle Davila, "but I will only give it to you on one condition."

"Conditions?—fie!" said Madame de Fiesco.

"You do not know what I mean," rejoined Grammont.

"Oh! we can guess that," said La Limeuil.

The Italian custom of calling ladies, as peasants call their wives, *La So-and-So*, was then in vogue at the French court.

"You are mistaken," replied the count, hastily, "it is simply a matter of returning to Mademoiselle de Matha, one of the ladies on the other bank, a letter from my cousin Jarnac."

"Do not compromise my girls," said the Comtesse de Fiesco, "I will deliver it myself.—Have you any news of what is happening in Flanders?" she asked Cardinal de Tournon. "It seems that Monsieur d'Egmont is yielding to the new ideas."

"He and the Prince of Orange," said Cypierre, with a most significant shrug.

"The Duke of Alva and Cardinal Granvelle are there, are they not, monsieur?" Amyot asked Cardinal de Tournon, who stood between the two groups, taciturn and anxious, after his conversation with the chancellor.

"Fortunately we are at peace, and have only to put down the heresy on the stage," said the young Duc d'Orléans, alluding to the part he had played in

the fête of the preceding day, that of a knight overcoming a hydra with the word *Reformation* on its forehead.

Catherine de' Medici, concurring therein with her daughter-in law, had allowed a theatre to be made of the vast hall which was subsequently arranged for the meetings of the estates of Blois, and which, as we have said before, lay between the château of François I. and that of Louis XII.

The cardinal made no reply, but resumed his promenade in the centre of the room, talking in undertones with Monsieur de Robertet and the chancellor. Few persons realize the obstacles which the secretaryships of State, since transformed into departments, encountered when they were first created, and how much difficulty the kings of France had in creating them. At that period, a secretary of State like Robertet was a scrivener pure and simple, and was of almost no consequence among the princes and great nobles who decided all affairs of State. There were no ministerial functions save those of the superintendent of the finances, chancellor, and keeper of the seals. The kings awarded places in their council by letters patent to those of their subjects whose opinions seemed likely to be of use to them in the conduct of public affairs. They admitted to the council the president of a chamber in the Parliament, a bishop, an untitled favorite. Once admitted to the council, the subject strengthened his position by obtaining offices under the crown which carried handsome perquisites with them,—such offices as

provincial governments, the sword of constable, the grand-mastership of artillery, the bâton of a marshal, the colonel-generalship of some military organization, the post of admiral, the captaincy of the galleys, and frequently some office at court, like the grand-mastership of the household, then filled by the Duc de Guise.

"Do you think that the Duc de Nemours will marry Françoise?" Madame de Guise asked the Duc d'Orléans's tutor.

"Ah! madame," he replied, "I know nothing but Latin."

This answer brought a smile to the lips of those who were within hearing. Just at that time the seduction of Françoise de Rohan by the Duc de Nemours was the all-engrossing subject of conversation; but as the Duc de Nemours was a cousin of François II., and doubly connected with the House of Valois through his mother, the Guises looked upon him as seduced rather than seducer. Nevertheless, the influence of the Rohan family was so great that, after the reign of François II., the Duc de Nemours was obliged to leave France, because of the suit which the Rohans brought against him and which was adjusted by the influence of the Guises. His marriage with the Duchesse de Guise after the duke was assassinated by Poltrot, may explain the question she asked Amyot, revealing as it does the rivalry that probably existed between Mademoiselle de Rohan and herself.

"Just look at the group of malcontents yonder,"

said the Comte de Grammont, pointing to Messieurs de Coligny, the Cardinal de Châtillon, Danville, Thoré, Moret, and several other noblemen suspected of dabbling in the Reformation, who were standing together between two windows near the other fireplace.

"The Huguenots are astir," said Cypierre. "We know that Théodore de Bèze is at Nérac to induce the Queen of Navarre to declare for the reformers by abjuring publicly," he added, with a glance at the Bailli of Orléans, who was also chancellor to the Queen of Navarre, and who was keeping watch upon the court.

"She will do it," rejoined the bailli, dryly.

This personage, the Jacques Cœur of Orléans, was one of the wealthiest bourgeois of the time; his name was Groslot, and he was Jeanne d'Albret's man of business at the French court.

"Do you think so?" queried the chancellor of France, appreciating the full import of Groslot's assertion.

"Do not you know," said the wealthy Orléanais, "that that queen has none of the attributes of woman except her sex? She is entirely devoted to virile pursuits, she has a mind competent to deal with great affairs of State, and her heart is unconquerable by the greatest disasters."

"Monsieur le cardinal," said Olivier to Monsieur de Tournon, who had been listening to Groslot, "what think you of such presumption?"

"The Queen of Navarre was well advised to

choose for her chancellor a man from whom the House of Lorraine is wont to borrow money, and who offers his house to the king when there is a suggestion of the court going to Orléans," replied the cardinal.

Thereupon the chancellor and the cardinal exchanged glances, not venturing to exchange thoughts; but Robertet expressed their thoughts for them, for he deemed it necessary to display greater devotion to the Guises than those great personages, realizing that he was of less consequence than they.

"It is a great misfortune that the House of Navarre, instead of abjuring the religion of its fathers, does not abjure the revengeful and rebellious spirit infused into it by the Constable de Bourbon. We are going to see a repetition of the quarrels of Armagnacs and Bourguignons."

"No," said Groslot, "for there is something of Louis XI. in the Cardinal de Lorraine."

"And also in Queen Catherine," retorted Robertet.

At that moment, Madame Dayelle, Queen Mary Stuart's favorite lady's-maid, crossed the hall toward the queen's chamber. Her appearance caused a commotion.

"We shall soon be admitted," said Madame de Fiesco.

"I think not," replied Madame de Guise; "their Majesties will come out, for there is to be a grand council."

La Dayelle glided into the royal chamber after

scratching at the door,—a respectful method of knocking invented by Catherine de' Medici and adopted by the court of France.

"What is the weather, my dear Dayelle?" said Queen Mary, putting aside the bed-curtains and showing her fresh, fair face.

"Ah! madame—"

"What is it, my Dayelle? one would say that the archers were at your heels."

"Oh! madame, is the king still asleep?"

"Yes."

"We are going to leave the château, and monsieur le cardinal bade me come and tell you so that you might prepare the king for it."

"Do you know why, my dear Dayelle?"

"The reformers intend to kidnap you."

"Ah! this new religion leaves me no peace! I dreamed last night that I was in prison, *I*, who am to wear the crowns of the three greatest kingdoms on earth!"

"So that it was only a dream, madame!"

"Kidnapped?—that would be rather nice; but to be kidnapped on account of religion, and by heretics, is horrible to think of!"

The queen jumped out of bed and seated herself in a large chair covered with red velvet, in front of the fireplace, after Dayelle had helped her to don a *robe de chambre* of black velvet, which she secured closely at the waist by a silk cord. Dayelle lighted the fire, for May mornings are decidedly cool on the banks of the Loire.

"So my uncles have had news during the night?" the queen asked Dayelle, whom she was accustomed to treat with familiarity.

"All the morning Messieurs de Guise have been walking on the terrace so that nobody could overhear them, and have received messengers who arrived in great haste from different parts of the kingdom where the reformers are moving. Madame the queen-mother was on hand with her Italians, hoping to be consulted, but she was not admitted to the private council."

"She must be frantic."

"Especially as there was some anger left over from yesterday," replied Dayelle. "They say that when she saw Your Majesty in your cloth-of-gold dress with your lovely veil of tan-colored crêpe, she was not overpleased."

"Leave us, good Dayelle, the king is waking. Let no one, not even those who have the *petite entrée*, disturb us; affairs of State are involved, and my uncles will not disturb us."

"Well, well, my dear Mary, out of bed already? Is it daylight?" said the young king, opening his eyes.

"My dear love, while we sleep, the wicked remain awake and compel us to leave this charming place."

"Why do you talk about wicked people, my darling? Did we not have the loveliest fête in the world yesterday, except for the Latin words those gentry mingled with our French?"

"Ah!" said Mary, "that language is considered

in very good taste, and Rabelais has already given us examples of it."

"You are a very learned person, and I am sorry that I cannot praise your talents in verse; if I were not king, I would take Master Amyot away from my brother, who is learning so much from him."

"Don't envy your brother, who writes verses and shows them to me, asking me to show him mine. I say you are the best of the four, and will make as good a king as you are a charming lover. Perhaps that is the reason your mother cares so little for you! But never fear. Dear heart, I will love you for all the world."

"I deserve no great credit for loving such a perfect queen," said the little king. "I do not know what kept me from kissing you yesterday before the whole court when you danced the torch dance! To my eyes all other women seem like servants beside you, my beautiful Mary."

"Although you speak only in prose, you speak charmingly, my darling; but you see it is love that speaks. And you know well, my best-beloved, that, were you only a poor little page, I would love you as much as I love you now, and yet there is nothing sweeter than to be able to say: 'My lover is king!'"

"Oh! what a pretty arm! Why need we dress? I love so to run my fingers through your soft hair, to tangle these fair locks. Ah! my life, do not let your women kiss that white neck, that soft back again, do not allow it! It is too much that the fogs of Scotland should ever have touched them."

"Won't you come and see my dear country? The Scotch will love you, and there will be no rebellion there as here."

"Who rebels in our kingdom?" said François de Valois, putting on his dressing-gown and taking Mary Stuart on his knee.

"Oh! this is all very sweet, most assuredly," she said, hiding her cheek from the king, "but by your leave, my gentle sire, you have to reign."

"Why talk of reigning? It is my will this morning—"

"Need you say *it is my will*, when you can do whatever you choose? Such talk is neither kingly nor loverlike. But no matter about that! We have important business on hand."

"Oho!" said the king, "it is a long while since we have had any business. Is it amusing?"

"No," said Mary, "it has to do with leaving Blois."

"I will wager, my love, that you have seen one of your uncles, who manage so well that at seventeen I appear to be a *roi fainéant*. In very truth, I do not know why I have continued to attend the councils since the first one. They could do everything just as well by putting a crown on my chair, for I see things only through their eyes and give my decisions blindly."

"O monsieur," cried the queen, standing over the king and pretending to be angry, "it was agreed that you should not worry me any more on that subject, and that my uncles should use the royal power for

the welfare of your people. They are a nice lot, this people of yours! if you should undertake to rule them alone, they would swallow you bodily like a strawberry. They need men of war, a stern master and iron-gloved hands; and you, why you are a darling whom I love so dearly and whom I can never love less, do you hear, monsieur?" she said, kissing the forehead of the child, who seemed to be offended at her speech, but whom that caress speedily mollified.

"Oh! if they were only not your uncles!" cried François II. "That cardinal is exceedingly disagreeable to me, and when he puts on that wheedling air of his and his humble manners and says to me, bowing to the ground: 'Sire, the honor of the crown and the faith of your ancestors are at stake here,—Your Majesty cannot permit—' And so forth and so on. I am sure that he is at work solely for his infernal House of Lorraine."

"How well you imitated him!" said the queen. "But why don't you employ these Lorraines to keep you informed of what is going on, so that you can reign yourself, in due time, when you attain your majority? I am your wife, and your honor is mine. We will reign some day, I promise you, my love! But our path will not be all roses until the time comes when we can do as we please, there is nothing so hard for a king to do as to reign. Am I queen, I should like to know? Do you think that your mother doesn't repay me in evil for all that my uncles are doing for the splendor of your

throne? And what a difference! My uncles are great princes, nephews of Charlemagne, full of esteem for you and only too willing to die for you; whereas this daughter of a doctor or shopkeeper, a queen by accident, is as shrewish as a bourgeoise who doesn't rule in her own house. On all occasions this Italian shows me her pale, solemn face, like a woman who is displeased because she can't turn everything upside-down; and she says with her thin, pinched lips: 'My daughter, you are queen and I am only the second woman in the kingdom.'—She is frantic, don't you see, my darling?—'But if I were in your place I would not wear scarlet velvet while all the court is in mourning, nor would I appear in public with my hair smooth and without jewels, because a thing that is unbecoming to a simple lady is still less becoming to a queen. Also I should not dance myself, but should content myself with watching others dance!'—That is the way she talks to me."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the king, "I believe I hear her. *Mon Dieu!* if she should know—"

"Ah! you still tremble before her," she replied. "She annoys you, doesn't she? Let us send her away. Faith! as for deceiving you, we must expect that, she is from Florence; but when it comes to annoying you —"

"In Heaven's name, hush, Mary!" said François, afraid and well pleased at the same time; "I should not like you to lose her friendship."

"Have no fear that she will ever fall out with me,

AT THE CHÂTEAU OF BLOIS

"Let us go," said the king.

"Go!" cried the grand master, suddenly entering the room. "Yes, sire, we must leave Blois. Pardon my boldness; but circumstances are more important than etiquette, and I come to beg you to hold a council."

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"Let us go," said the king.

"Ca!" cried the groom in astonishment, suddenly entering the room. "Yes, sire, see where here Blois. Pardon my boldness; but circumstances are more important than etiquette, and I come to beg you to hold a council."



who wear the three grandest crowns in the world, my dear little king," said Mary Stuart. "Although she hates me for a thousand reasons, she cajoles me in order to separate me from my uncles."

"Hates you!"

"Yes, my angel; if I had not innumerable proofs of that sentiment, of the sort that women give one another,—proofs whose malicious meaning they alone understand,—her constant opposition to our love would be enough. Is it my fault that your father was never able to endure Mademoiselle de' Medici? Indeed, she loves me so little that, if you had not lost your temper, we should have had separate apartments, here and at Saint-Germain. She declared that that was the custom among kings and queens of France. Custom! it was your father's custom, and no wonder. As for your grandfather, François, the goodman adopted the custom for the convenience of his amours. So be very careful, if we go away from here, that the grand master does not part us."

"If we go away from here, Mary? Why, I do not propose to leave this delightful château, from which we can see the Loire and Blois and its neighborhood, a town at our feet, and the loveliest sky in the world over our heads, and these beautiful gardens. If I go from here, it will be to go to Italy with you, to see Saint Peter's, and Raphael's pictures."

"And the orange-trees? Oh! my darling king, if you knew how your Mary longs to walk under orange-trees in flower and fruit! Alas! perhaps I

shall never see such things. Oh! to hear an Italian song under those perfumed trees, on the shore of a blue ocean, beneath a blue sky, and to sit together thus!"

"Let us go," said the king.

"Go!" cried the grand master, suddenly entering the room. "Yes, sire, we must leave Blois. Pardon my boldness; but circumstances are more important than etiquette, and I come to beg you to hold a council."

Mary and François had hastily separated, when they were thus taken by surprise, and their faces wore the same expression of offended royal majesty.

"You are a too grand master, Monsieur de Guise," said the young king, restraining his wrath.

"To the devil with lovers!" the cardinal whispered in Catherine's ear.

"My son," said the queen-mother, appearing from behind the cardinal, "the safety of your person and of your kingdom is at stake."

"Heresy was awake while you were sleeping, sire," said the cardinal.

"Withdraw to the council-hall," said the little king, "and we will hold a council."

"Madame," said the grand master to the queen, "your furrier's son has brought you your furs, which arrive very opportunely for the journey, for it is probable that we shall go by the Loire.—But," he added, turning to the queen-mother, "he wishes to speak to you as well, madame. While the king is dressing, will not you and Madame la

reine despatch your business with him, so that we may not be annoyed and delayed by this trifling matter?"

"Certainly," said Catherine, adding mentally: "If he expects to get rid of me by such ruses, he does not know me."

*

The cardinal and the duke withdrew, leaving the two queens and the king together. As he passed through the *salle des gardes* on his way to the *salle du conseil*, the grand master bade the usher bring the queen's furrier before him. When Christophe saw the usher, whom he took for a personage of importance, coming toward him from the farther end of the hall, his heart failed him; and the sensation of alarm, so natural at the approach of the critical moment, became horrible when the usher, whose movements resulted in directing the eyes of the whole brilliant assemblage upon Christophe, his packages, and his shabby aspect, said to him:

"Messeigneurs the Cardinal de Lorraine and the grand master have sent for you to speak with them in the council-chamber."

"Can I have been betrayed?" thought the defenceless ambassador of the reformers.

He followed the usher, keeping his eyes on the ground, and did not raise them until he had been ushered into the vast *salle du conseil*, which was almost equal in size to the *salle des gardes*. The two Lorraine princes were standing before the superb fireplace on the other side of the partition from the one in the *salle des gardes*, before which the maids of honor of the two queens were standing.

"You come from Paris; what route did you take?"

"I came by water, monseigneur."

"How did you enter Blois?" said the grand master.

"By way of the harbor, monseigneur."

"And no one molested you?" said the duke, keeping his eyes fixed on the young man.

"No, monseigneur. I told the first soldier who seemed disposed to stop me, that I had come on business with the two queens, whose furrier my father is."

"What is going on in Paris?" the cardinal inquired.

"They are still searching for the murderer of President Minard."

"Aren't you the son of my surgeon's greatest friend?" said the Duc de Guise, deceived by the innocent expression assumed by Christophe as soon as his first alarm had subsided.

"Yes, monseigneur."

The grand master turned away, hastily raised the portière which concealed the folding-doors of the *salle du conseil*, and showed his face to the whole assemblage, seeking the king's first surgeon. Ambroise, who was standing in a corner, met the duke's eye and walked toward him. Ambroise, who was already leaning toward the Reformed religion, ended by adopting it; but the friendship of the Guises and of the kings of France sheltered him from all the disasters which overtook the reformers. The duke, who considered that he was indebted to Ambroise

Paré for his life, had procured his appointment as the king's first surgeon some days before.

"What is your will, monseigneur?" said Ambroise. "Is the king ill? I should not be surprised."

"Why so?"

"The queen is too pretty," the surgeon replied.

"Oho!" ejaculated the duke, in surprise. "However, that is not why I wanted you," he continued, after a pause. "Ambroise, I want to introduce you to a friend of yours," he said, leading him to the door of the council-chamber and pointing to Christophe.

"Ah! true, monseigneur," cried the surgeon, holding out his hand to Christophe.—"How's your father, my boy?"

"Very well, Master Ambroise," Christophe replied.

"Why on earth have you come to court?" said the surgeon; "it is not your business to carry packages, your father intends to make you a lawyer. Do you seek the patronage of these two great princes to help you in your profession?"

"*Mon Dieu*, yes," said Christophe, "and in my father's interest, too; if you can intercede for us," he said, assuming a piteous expression, "pray add your entreaties to mine to obtain from Monseigneur the Grand Master an order for the payment of the sums due to my father, for he does not know which way to turn."

The cardinal and the grand master exchanged glances and seemed satisfied.

"Now leave us," said the grand master, waving

his hand to Ambroise.—"And do you, my friend," he said to Christophe, "settle your business speedily and return to Paris. My secretary will give you a safe-conduct; for it will not be safe travelling on the high-roads, *mordieu!*"

Neither of the two brothers had the slightest suspicion of the momentous interests dependent upon Christophe, being fully satisfied that he was really the son of that loyal Catholic, Lecamus, furrier to the court, and that he had come only to procure his money.

"Take him to the queen's chamber; she will ask for him in a moment, doubtless," said the cardinal to the surgeon, pointing to Christophe.

While the furrier's son was being questioned in the *salle du conseil*, the king had left the queen with her mother-in-law and gone to his dressing-room, which was reached through the cabinet adjoining the chamber.

Standing in the broad recess of an enormous window, Queen Catherine was gazing out upon the gardens, a prey to the most melancholy thoughts. She foresaw that one of the greatest soldiers of the age would be substituted that very morning, instantly, for her son, for the King of France, under the redoubtable title of lieutenant-general of the kingdom. In face of that peril, she was alone, powerless to act, defenceless. In her mourning garb, which she never laid aside after the death of Henri II., she could fittingly be compared to a phantom, her pale face had become so statuelike by much

reflection. Her black eyes floated in that indecision which is considered so blameworthy in great politicians, but which is due to the very extent of the glance with which they descry all the difficulties in their path, setting them off against one another, and computing the chances, so to speak, before making up their minds. Her ears were ringing, her blood was rushing madly through her veins, and yet she maintained a dignified, tranquil bearing, measuring the depth of the political abyss in excess of that of the physical abyss that lay at her feet. As the day of the arrest of the Vidame de Chartres was the first, so this was the second of those terrible days which were so numerous during the remainder of her royal life; but this was her last blunder in the school of power. Although the sceptre seemed to be escaping from her hands, she was determined to grasp it, and she did grasp it by virtue of that powerful will, which was never tired out, either by the contempt of her father-in-law, François II., and his court, where she had been of so little consequence, dauphiness though she was, or by the constant slights of Henri II., or by the formidable opposition of her rival, Diane de Poitiers.

A man would have utterly failed to understand this thwarted queen; but the fair-haired Mary, shrewd, clever creature that she was, so girlish and withal so well informed, watched her out of the corner of her eye, humming an Italian air and feigning indifference. Although she could not divine the tempest of restrained ambition which brought drops of cold perspiration to the Florentine's brow, the

pretty Scotch girl with the roguish face knew that the elevation of her uncle the Duc de Guise caused Catherine to rage and fume inwardly. Now, nothing was so entertaining to her as to play the spy upon her mother-in-law, whom she considered an intriguing creature, an upstart humiliated and always ready to grasp an opportunity for revenge. Her face was grave and moody, almost terrifying, because of the livid hue of the women of Italy which makes their complexion resemble yellow ivory by daylight, although it becomes dazzlingly brilliant by candle-light; whereas the other's face was rosy and merry. At sixteen years of age, Mary Stuart's complexion had that pure whiteness of a perfect blonde which made her so celebrated. Her fresh, piquant face, so pure in outline, sparkled with childish roguishness, clearly expressed in the regularity of her eyebrows, in the bright sparkle of her eyes, and in the saucy curve of her lovely mouth. Thus early in life she displayed those kittenish charms which nothing could destroy—not captivity, nor the ghastly sight of her own scaffold. Thus, those two queens, one at the dawn, the other in the summer of life, formed a most complete contrast to each other. Catherine was an imposing queen, an impenetrable widow, with no other passion than the passion for power. Mary was a giddy creature, a heedless bride, who made playthings of her queenly crowns. The former foresaw terrible disasters, she had visions of the assassination of the Guises, divining that that would prove to be the only method of

crushing men who were quite capable of rising above the throne and the Parliament; and she foresaw the bloodshed of a long conflict; the other had no suspicion that she was destined to be murdered under the forms of law. A curious reflection restored the Italian's tranquillity to some extent.

"According to what the soothsayer and Ruggieri say, this reign will soon end; my embarrassment will be of brief duration," she thought.

Thus, strangely enough, an occult science, to-day unknown,—judicial astrology,—served Catherine as a prop at that moment, as it did throughout her life, for her faith in it constantly increased as she saw that the predictions of those who practised that science were fulfilled with minute exactness.

"You are very thoughtful, madame, are you not?" said Mary Stuart, as she took from Dayelle's hands the little cap which she wore on top of her head, with its two wings of rich lace resting on the fair locks which clustered about her temples.

Painters with their brushes have so often represented that head-dress that it may be considered as belonging exclusively to the Queen of Scots, although Catherine designed it for herself when she was obliged to wear mourning for Henri II.; but she could not wear it with the graceful charm of her daughter-in-law, to whom it was far more becoming. This was not the least of the queen-mother's many grievances against the young queen.

"Does the queen mean to reproach me?" said Catherine, turning toward her daughter-in-law.

"I owe you all respect and should not dare," retorted the Scotch girl, maliciously, glancing at Dayelle.

The favorite maid stood between the two queens as motionless as a fire-dog; a smile of approbation might cost her her life.

"How can I be as light of heart as you, just after losing the late king, and when I see that my son's kingdom is on the point of bursting into flame?"

"Women have little concern with political affairs," rejoined Mary Stuart. "At all events, my uncles are here."

Those words were like poisoned arrows under existing circumstances.

"Let us look at our furs, madame," replied the Italian, ironically; "in that way we can attend to our proper affairs while your uncles decide the affairs of the realm."

"Oh! but we shall be present at the council, madame; we are more useful there than you imagine."

"We?" said Catherine, with an air of amazement. "But I do not know Latin."

"You think me very learned!" laughed Mary Stuart. "Ah! well, madame, I give you my word that at this moment I am studying to know as much as the Medicis, so that I may be able some day to *cure* the wounds of the kingdom."

Catherine was cut to the heart by that stinging retort which alluded to the origin of the Medicis, who were descended, according to some authorities,

from a physician, and according to others, from a wealthy druggist. She could think of no retort. Dayelle blushed when her mistress looked at her in search of the applause which everybody, even a queen, craves from her inferiors when there are no spectators.

"Your charming words, madame, unfortunately cannot cure either the wounds of the State or those of the Church," observed Catherine, with calm, cold dignity. "My ancestors' knowledge, in that direction, gave them thrones; whereas you may lose yours, if, while danger is impending, you continue to jest."

At this juncture, Dayelle opened the door and admitted Christophe, whom the first surgeon himself announced by scratching.

The reformer attempted to study Catherine's face, feigning an embarrassment by no means unnatural in such a place; but he was taken by surprise by the vivacity of Queen Mary, who pounced upon his package in her haste to see her *surcot*.

"Madame," said Christophe, addressing the Florentine.

He turned his back to the other queen and Dayelle, taking instant advantage of the attention the two women were bestowing upon the furs to attempt a bold stroke.

"What do you wish with me?" said Catherine, darting a piercing glance at him.

Christophe had placed the treaty proposed by the Prince de Condé, the plan of operations of the reformers, and the detailed statement of their forces,

between his shirt and his broadcloth doublet, the whole wrapped in the memorandum of the sum Catherine owed the furrier.

"Madame," he said, "my father is sadly in need of money, and if you will deign to cast your eyes upon our account," he added, unfolding the paper and placing the treaty uppermost, "you will see that Your Majesty owes him six thousand crowns. Pray take pity on us. See, madame!"

And he handed her the treaty.

"Read. It dates from the late king's accession to the throne."

Catherine was bewildered by the preamble of the treaty, but she did not lose her head; she hastily rolled up the paper, admiring the young man's hardihood and presence of mind; that masterly stroke made her feel certain that she would be understood, and she said, tapping his cheek with the roll of paper:

"You are very awkward, my young friend, to present the account before the furs. You must learn to know women better! You should never present your bill until we are satisfied."

"Is that a tradition?" the young queen asked her mother-in-law, who made no reply.

"Oh! mesdames, pray excuse my father," said Christophe. "If he were not in need of money, you would not have had your furs. The country is up in arms, and there is so much danger on the roads that nothing less than our distress would have brought me here. No one but myself was willing to venture."

"This lad is decidedly inexperienced," said Mary Stuart, with a smile.

It may be well, for the understanding of this trivial but momentous scene, to remark that a *surcot* was, as the word itself indicates,—*sur cotte*,—a sort of tight-fitting jacket, which women wore over their bodices, and which reached to the hips, following the outline of the figure. It protected the back, the chest, and the neck from the cold. *Surcots* were lined with fur of which there was also a border on the outside, wider or narrower, as it happened. Mary Stuart, as she tried on the new garment, looked at herself in a great Venetian mirror to see how it fitted behind; she thus gave her mother-in-law an opportunity to examine the papers, the bulk of which might otherwise have aroused her suspicion.

"Does a man ever speak to women of the risks he has run, when he has come through them safe and sound and can see them?" said the young queen to Christophe, turning so that he could see her.

"Ah! madame, I have your account, too," he said, looking at her with well-feigned simplicity.

The young queen looked closely at him without taking the paper, and noticed, but did not attach the least importance to the fact, that he had taken Queen Catherine's account from his bosom, while he produced hers from his pocket. Nor did she see in the boy's eyes the admiration which her beauty aroused in everybody; but she was so engrossed by her *surcot* that she did not at once ask herself the explanation of his indifference.

"Take the account, Dayelle!" she said to her maid; "you will hand it to Monsieur de Versailles—Loménie—and tell him from me to pay it."

"Oh! madame, unless you obtain an order for me signed by the king or by the grand master, who is in yonder hall, your gracious word would have no effect."

"You are more malapert than becomes a subject, my friend," said Mary Stuart. "Have you no faith, pray, in royal promises?"

At that moment, the king appeared, in silk stockings and knee-breeches,—the trousers of that period,—but without doublet or cloak; he wore a rich velvet *redingote* edged with *menu-vair*—miniver; that is the only term in our modern language which will describe the king's undress costume.

"Who is the knave that dares doubt your word?" said François, who heard his wife's last remark, notwithstanding the distance between them.

The door of the cabinet was concealed by the royal bed. It was called at a later period the "old cabinet," to distinguish it from the rich cabinet of paintings which Henri III. arranged at the other extremity of the apartment, toward the hall of the States General. Henri III. concealed the murderers in this old cabinet, and sent to the Duc de Guise to join him there; and, during the murder, he remained hidden in the new cabinet, whence he emerged only in time to witness the death of that audacious subject, for whom there was no prison, no court, no judges, no laws in the realm. Except for that

ghastly circumstance, the historian would find difficulty to-day in identifying all these halls and cabinets, now filled with soldiers. A quartermaster writes to his mistress on the very spot where Catherine, lost in thought, determined upon her conflict with the various factions.

"Come, my friend," said the queen-mother, "and I will see that you are paid. Trade must live, and money is its principal nerve."

"Go, my dear youth," said the young queen, with a laugh; "my august mother is better versed than I in commercial affairs."

Catherine was about to leave the room without replying to this last epigram; but she reflected that her indifference might awake suspicion, so she quickly retorted:

"And you, my dear, understand the commerce of love better than I."

With that she took her leave.

"Put away the furs, Dayelle.—And let us go to the council, monsieur," said the young queen, overjoyed at the opportunity to decide, in the queen-mother's absence, the momentous question of the lieutenancy of the kingdom.

Mary Stuart took the king's arm. Dayelle went out first, saying a word to the pages; and one of them, young Téligny, who was destined to die a shocking death in the Saint-Bartholomew affair, cried out:

"The king!"

At the word, the two arquebusiers presented arms

and the two pages led the way toward the council-chamber, through the double line formed by the courtiers and the female attendants of the two queens. All the members of the council gathered in a group at the door of the council-chamber, which was only a short distance from the door leading to the staircase. The grand master, the cardinal, and the chancellor stepped forward to meet the youthful sovereigns, who smiled at some of the maids of honor and answered the questions of a few courtiers who were on more familiar terms than the others. But the young queen was evidently impatient, and drew François II. toward the great council-chamber. When the heavy sound of the arquebuses, ringing on the floor, announced that the royal couple had entered, the pages replaced their caps on their heads, and the noblemen continued their private conversations concerning the momentous affairs about to be discussed.

"They sent Chiverni to summon the constable, and he has not come," said one.

"There is no prince of the blood here," observed another.

"The chancellor and Monsieur de Tournon seemed very anxious!"

"The grand master sent word to the keeper of the seals not to fail to be present at the council; doubtless there will be some new letters patent as the result of it."

"How can the queen-mother remain below, in her own apartments, at such a moment?"

"They are going to cut out some work for us," said Groslot to the Cardinal de Châtillon.

In fact, everyone had his word to say. Some went in and out of the great hall, others fluttered about the attendants of the two queens, as if they hoped to catch a word or two through a wall three feet thick, or through two doors and the rich portières which hung before them.

Seated at the head of the long table covered with blue velvet, which stood in the centre of the council-chamber, the king, by whose side the young queen had taken her place in a great armchair, was awaiting his mother. Robertet was mending his pens. The two cardinals, the grand master, the chancellor, the keeper of the seals, the whole council, in short, watched the little king, wondering why he did not bid them be seated.

"Shall we deliberate in the absence of Madame la reine mère?" said the chancellor, addressing the king.

The two Lorraine princes attributed Catherine's absence to some stratagem on their niece's part. Inspired by a significant glance from her, the presumptuous cardinal said to the king:

"Is it the king's good pleasure that we begin without Madame la reine mère?"

François II., not daring to declare his wishes, answered:

"Be seated, messieurs."

The cardinal set forth briefly the perils of the situation. That great politician, who was wonderfully

adroit in such emergencies, broached the question of the lieutenancy amid a profound silence. Doubtless the young king was conscious of a feeling of oppression and realized that his mother had the utmost regard for the rights of the crown, and knew by what dangers his power was threatened, for he replied to a further direct question from the cardinal:

"Let us await the queen my mother."

Enlightened by Queen Catherine's extraordinary delay, Mary suddenly, at the same instant, recalled three circumstances, which she remembered vividly. First, the great bulk of the account presented to her mother-in-law, which had impressed her although her mind was elsewhere, for a woman who seems to see nothing is a veritable lynx; secondly, the place in which Christophe kept it, separate from her own.

"Why was that?" she wondered.

And, thirdly, she remembered the fellow's indifferent expression, which she at once attributed to a reformer's hatred of the niece of the Guises. An inward voice cried out: "Might he not be a messenger of the Huguenots?"—Obeying, like all ardent natures, her first impulse, she said:

"I will go myself and bring my mother!"

With that she abruptly left the room and ran hastily downstairs, to the unbounded amazement of courtiers and ladies; she went down to her mother-in-law's suite, passed through the *salle des gardes* on that floor, opened the bedroom door as cautiously as a thief, glided through like a shadow, and saw her nowhere; she thought that she was certain to

surprise her in the superb closet between the bedroom and the oratory. The arrangement of that oratory, which, by the customs of that epoch, played the same part in private life that is played by the boudoir to-day, can still be recognized.

By a chance that seems inexplicable when we consider the state of dilapidation in which the crown leaves the château of Blois, the beautiful wainscoting of Catherine's closet still exists, and in that finely carved wainscoting the curious observer can still detect traces of its Italian magnificence and discover the hiding-places which the queen-mother had had made there. An exact description of these curiosities is essential to a proper understanding of what was about to take place. The wainscoting consisted of about a hundred and eighty small oblong panels, of which a hundred or more still exist, all embellished with arabesques of different designs, evidently suggested by the most beautiful arabesques of Italy. The wood is evergreen oak. The red which we find under the whitewash, which was laid on as a protection against cholera,—a useless precaution,—indicates clearly enough that the background of the panels was gilded. The spots where the whitewash has dropped off seem to indicate that certain parts of the design were painted in colors, red or blue or green, on the gold background. The multitude of the panels clearly reveals a purpose to mislead prying eyes; but, if we are inclined to doubt it, the concierge of the château, while commending Catherine's memory to the execration of the human

race of the present day, points out to visitors, at the base of the wainscoting, on a level with the floor, a heavy base-board, which can be lifted, and beneath which an ingenious arrangement of springs can still be seen. By pressing a spring thus concealed, the queen could open certain of the panels known to her alone, behind which, in the wall, there is an oblong hiding-place of the same size as the panel, but of considerable depth. Even to-day the most expert eye would find it difficult to decide which one of all those panels will move in response to that invisible spring; and when the eyes were bewildered by colors and gilding carefully arranged to conceal the cracks, one can readily believe that it was impossible to select one or two panels out of two hundred.

As Mary Stuart put her hand on the latch of the complicated lock of this closet, the Italian, who had had time to convince herself of the magnitude of the Prince de Condé's plans, had just pressed the spring concealed behind the base-board, one of the panels had sunk out of sight, and Catherine was turning to take the papers from the table, intending to hide them, and then to look to the safety of the devoted emissary who brought them. Hearing the door open, she knew that Queen Mary alone could have entered unannounced.

"You are lost," she said to Christophe, seeing that she had not time to put the papers away or to close the panel quickly enough to prevent the discovery of her secret.

Christophe replied with a sublime glance.

"*Povero mio!*" said Catherine, before turning to her daughter-in-law.—"Treason, madame, I have them," she cried. "Send for the cardinal and the duke. Do not let this man leave the room!" she added, pointing to Christophe.

In an instant that shrewd woman had determined that it was necessary to abandon the unfortunate youth; she could not hide him, it was impossible to save him. Moreover, a week earlier there would still have been time; but the Guises had known the whole conspiracy since that morning, they undoubtedly had the lists which she held in her hand, and were evidently leading the reformers into a trap. And so, although she was delighted to have discovered in her adversaries the spirit she hoped to find in them, policy demanded that, as the spark had failed to ignite, she should claim credit for that failure. This pitiless decision was reached in the brief moment while the queen was opening the door. For an instant, Mary Stuart said not a word. Her face lost its gayety and assumed the piercing expression which suspicion gives to the eyes of every man or woman, and which in her case was made terrible by the suddenness of the contrast. Her eyes ranged from the queen-mother to Christophe and from Christophe to the queen-mother, alive with malevolent suspicions. Then she rang a bell which was answered by one of the queen-mother's attendants.

"Mademoiselle de Rouet, send hither the captain of the guard who is on duty," said Mary to the

maid of honor, contrary to etiquette, which is necessarily thrust aside on such occasions.

While the young queen gave this order, Catherine looked earnestly at Christophe, saying to him by her glance: "Courage!"—The reformer understood, and replied with a glance which signified: "Sacrifice me as *they* sacrifice me!"—"Rely upon me," Catherine rejoined with a gesture. Then, as her daughter-in-law turned, she became absorbed in the papers.

"You are of the Reformed religion?" Mary asked Christophe.

"Yes, madame," he replied.

"I was not mistaken," she muttered, detecting again in the reformer's eyes that same glance, wherein indifference and hatred were disguised beneath an affectation of humility.

Pardaillan suddenly appeared, sent by the Lorraine princes and the king. The captain for whom Mary Stuart had sent followed that young nobleman, who was one of the most devoted Guisards.

"Go and say to the king, the grand master, and the cardinal that I ask them to come hither, and assure them that I should not take this liberty had not something of superior importance occurred. Go, Pardaillan.—And do you, Lewiston, keep close watch upon this traitor of a Huguenot," she said to the Scot in her mother-tongue, pointing to Christophe.

The young queen and the queen-mother did not exchange a word until the arrival of the princes and the king. It was a terrible moment.

Mary Stuart had disclosed to her mother-in-law in

its fullest extent the part which her uncles caused her to play; her habitual, constant distrust had made itself manifest, and that youthful conscience felt keenly how dishonoring to a young queen that part was. Catherine, for her part, had acted as she had through fear, she was afraid that her action would be understood, and she trembled for her future. Each of those two women, the one shamefaced and indignant, the other overflowing with hatred, but calm, walked to the window-recess and leaned against the wall, one at the right, the other at the left; but their glances were so eloquent of their feelings that they averted their eyes, and resorting to the same artifice, gazed through the window at the sky. At that moment, those two superior women displayed no more wit than the most commonplace of mortals. Perhaps it is generally thus when human beings are overwhelmed by circumstances. There is always a time when genius itself feels its littleness in presence of great disasters. As for Christophe, he was like a man who is falling over a precipice. Lewiston, the Scottish captain, listened during this silence; he watched the furrier's son and the two queens with soldierly curiosity. The entrance of the young king and his two uncles put an end to this painful situation. The cardinal went straight to the queen-mother.

"I hold all the threads of the heretics' conspiracy; they sent yonder child to me with this treaty and these other documents," said Catherine, in a low voice.

While Catherine was conversing with the cardinal, Queen Mary whispered a few words in the grand master's ear.

"What is all this about?" said the young king, who was left alone amid these fiercely clashing interests.

"The proofs of what I said to Your Majesty are not slow in coming," said the cardinal, seizing the papers.

The Duc de Guise took his brother aside, heedless of the fact that he interrupted him, and whispered:

"This makes me lieutenant-general without opposition."

A crafty glance was the cardinal's only reply; it gave his brother to understand that he had already grasped all the advantages to be derived from Catherine's false position.

"Who sent you?" said the duke to Christophe.

"Chaudieu the minister," was the reply.

"Young man, you lie!" said the soldier, quickly, "it was the Prince de Condé!"

"The Prince de Condé, monseigneur?" rejoined Christophe, with a surprised air; "I never met him. I am from the Palais de Justice, I am studying with Monsieur de Thou, I am his secretary and he doesn't know that I am of the religion. I yielded only at the minister's persistent entreaty."

"Enough," said the cardinal.—"Summon Monsieur le Robertet," he said to Lewiston, "for this young knave is craftier than many old politicians; he has deceived my brother, and myself, too, who

would have given him the sacrament without confession."

"You are no child, *morbleu!*" cried the duke, "and we will treat you as a man."

"He attempted to corrupt your august mother," said the cardinal, addressing the king, and trying to lead him aside in order to bring him around to his cunning designs.

"Alas!" rejoined the queen, assuming a reproachful expression, and detaining her son as the cardinal was leading him into the oratory to subject him to his perilous eloquence; "you see the result of my present situation; I am naturally supposed to be irritated because I, the mother of four princes of the House of Valois, have so little influence in public affairs."

The young king became attentive; Mary Stuart, seeing that his brow contracted, took his arm and led him into the window recess, where she cajoled him with soft words spoken in an undertone, and doubtless of the same nature as those she had said to him just before when they rose. The two brothers seized the opportunity to read the papers handed them by Queen Catherine. Finding therein intelligence of which their spies and Monsieur de Braguelonne, the lieutenant criminal of the Châtelet, had no knowledge, they were inclined to believe in Catherine de' Medici's good faith. Robertet came and received secret orders relative to Christophe. The youthful instrument of the leaders of the Reformation was thereupon taken away by four of the

Scottish Guards who led him downstairs and delivered him to Monsieur de Montrésor, provost of the château. That redoubtable official in person, attended by five of his sergeants, conducted Christophe to the prison of the château in the vaulted cellars of the tower now in ruins, which the concierge of the château of Blois points out to visitors to-day with the remark that the dungeons used to be there.

After such an episode, the council could be nothing more than a mere formal affair; the king, the young queen, the grand master, and the Cardinal de Lorraine returned to the council-chamber, accompanied by the vanquished Catherine, who did not speak except to assent to the measures recommended by the Lorraines. Notwithstanding the faint opposition of the Chancellor Olivier, the only person who uttered a word suggestive of the independence necessary for the proper discharge of his functions, the Duc de Guise was appointed lieutenant-general of the kingdom. Robertet produced the necessary documents with a promptitude indicative of a slavish devotion which might be called complicity.

The king, offering his arm to his mother, once more passed through the *salle des gardes*, informing the court that he proposed to go to the château of Amboise on the following day. That royal residence had been abandoned since Charles VIII. accidentally killed himself there by running against the frame of a door that was being carved, thinking that

he could pass under the scaffolding without stooping. Catherine, to conceal the projects of the Guises, said that it was her purpose to finish the château of Amboise for the Crown while her own château of Chenonceaux was being finished. But no one was deceived by that pretext, and the court anticipated momentous events.

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After he had passed about two hours endeavoring to distinguish his surroundings in the darkness of his dungeon, Christophe finally discovered that there was a wooden sheathing, rough in quality but thick enough to make the little square cage healthy and habitable. The door was like the entrance to a pig-pen, and he had had to bend double when he went in. Beside the door was an iron grating opening on a sort of corridor, through which there came a little air and light. This arrangement of the dungeon, in every respect like that of the dungeons of Venice, showed clearly enough that the architect of the château of Blois belonged to that Venetian school which gave so many builders to Europe during the Middle Ages. Upon feeling the walls above the sheathing, Christophe discovered that those which separated it from two similar dungeons on the right and left were of brick. As he tapped one of them to obtain an idea of its thickness, he was surprised to hear tapping on the other side.

"Who are you?" his neighbor asked, speaking through the corridor.

"I am Christophe Lecamus."

"I am Captain Chaudieu, the minister's brother," said the voice. "I was taken last night at Beaugency; but luckily there is nothing against me."

"Everything is discovered," said Christophe. "So you are safely out of the trouble."

"We have three thousand men in the forests of the Vendomois at this moment, all of them of sufficient courage and determination to kidnap the king and queen-mother during their journey. Luckily, La Renaudie was shrewder than I, and he escaped. You had just left us when the Guisards captured us."

"But I don't know La Renaudie."

"Bah! my brother told me the whole story."

Upon that, Christophe sat down on his bench and made no reply to anything that the pretended captain chose to ask him, for he had had enough experience of the law to know how prudent a man must be in prison. In the middle of the night he saw the pale gleam of a lantern in the corridor, after hearing the groaning of the great bolts which secured the iron door of the vaults. The provost came himself to fetch Christophe. Such solicitude for a man who had been left without food in his dungeon seemed strange to the young man; but the confusion caused by the preparations for transferring the court to Amboise had, doubtless, prevented their thinking of him. One of the provost's sergeants bound his hands with a rope, and led him by that rope to one of the lower rooms in the château of Louis XII., which was evidently used as an antechamber to the apartments of some person of consequence. The provost and the sergeant bade him sit upon a bench, and the sergeant bound his feet as he had

bound his hands. At a signal from Monsieur de Montrésor, the sergeant went out.

"Hark ye, my friend," said the provost to Christophe, playing with the collar of the Order, for he was in full official costume at that late hour.

This trifling circumstance gave the furrier's son much food for thought. He saw plainly that they had not done with him. Certainly there was no thought of hanging him or trying him at that moment.

"My friend, you can save yourself cruel suffering by telling me all that you know of the negotiations between Monsieur le Prince de Condé and Queen Catherine. Not only will no harm be done you, but you will be taken into the service of the lieutenant-general of the kingdom, who likes intelligent fellows like you, and on whom your honest face has produced a deep impression. The queen-mother will be sent back to Florence, and Monsieur de Condé will undoubtedly be put on trial. Take my word for it, the humble ought to attach themselves to the great who have the power. Tell me everything, you will find it to your advantage."

"Alas! monsieur," replied Christophe, "I have nothing to tell; I confessed all that I know to Messieurs de Guise in the queen's chamber. Chaudieu persuaded me to lay some papers before the queen-mother, making me believe that the peace of the kingdom depended upon it."

"You have never seen the Prince de Condé?"

"Never," said Christophe.

Thereupon Monsieur de Montrésor left Christophe and went into an adjoining room. Christophe did not remain long alone. The door through which he had come soon opened and gave passage to several men who did not close it, but went in and out, making noises in the courtyard that were far from diverting. They brought pieces of wood and machines evidently intended for the torture of the Huguenots' envoy. Christophe's curiosity soon found ample material for reflection in the preparations which the new-comers made before his eyes. Two coarse, poorly-clad assistants obeyed the orders of a powerful, thick-set man who, immediately on entering the room, had cast upon Christophe the glance with which the cannibal eyes his victim; he had looked him over, appraised him, estimated like a connoisseur the strength and resisting power of his nerves. That man was the executioner of Blois. His assistants went in and out several times, bringing a mattress, mallets, wooden wedges, boards, and other objects whose use, although not clearly apparent, did not seem likely to be comforting to the poor boy for whom these preparations were being made, and whose blood froze in his veins as the result of a horrible although ill-defined apprehension. Two other individuals entered at the same moment that Monsieur de Montrésor returned to the room.

"Well, is nothing ready?" said the provost, whom the new-comers saluted with respect.—"Do you know," he added, addressing the stout man and his two assistants, "that monseigneur le cardinal

believes you to be already at work?—Doctor," he continued, turning to one of the new-comers, "this is your man."

And he pointed to Christophe.

The doctor went to the prisoner, unbound his hands, and pounded him on the chest and back. Science supplemented in all seriousness the executioner's cursory examination. Meanwhile, a servant in the livery of the Guises brought several armchairs, a table, and writing materials.

"Begin your report," said Monsieur de Montrésor, motioning to the second person, a clerk dressed in black, to take his seat at the table.

Then he returned and stood beside Christophe, to whom he said, very gently:

"My friend, the chancellor having been informed that you refuse to answer my questions satisfactorily, has determined that you be put to the question ordinary and extraordinary."

"Is he in good health, and can he bear it?" the clerk asked the physician.

"Yes," replied the latter, who was one of the physicians of the House of Lorraine.

"Very well; withdraw to the adjoining room; we will send for you whenever it may be necessary to consult you."

The physician left the room.

His first terror passed, Christophe summoned his courage anew: the hour of his martyrdom had come. Thenceforth he watched with unmoved curiosity the arrangements made by the executioner and his

assistants. Having hastily prepared a bed, the two latter made ready for use machines called *brodequins*, consisting of several planks between two of which each of the victim's legs was placed, and he was held within small mattresses. The legs were then placed close together. The apparatus used by bookbinders to press volumes between two boards put together by cords gives a very accurate idea of the way in which each of the victim's legs was arranged. One can readily imagine the effect produced by driving a wedge with a mallet between the two appliances in which the legs were held fast, and which were themselves bound together by stout cords, so that they did not give. The wedges were driven in at the knees and ankles, as if it were a matter of splitting a log of wood. The choice of those two spots, where there is little flesh so that the wedge makes room for itself at the expense of the bones, made that form of the question horribly painful. In the ordinary question, four wedges were driven in, two at the ankles and two at the knees; but in the extraordinary question, as many as eight were used, provided that the physicians considered that the sufferer's power of feeling was not exhausted. At that period, the *brodequins* were also applied to the hands; but, being pressed for time, the cardinal, lieutenant-general, and chancellor spared Christophe that additional torture.

The report was begun, the provost having dictated a few sentences as he walked back and forth with a meditative air, asking Christophe his various names,

his age, and his profession; then he asked him from whom he received the papers he had handed the queen.

"From Chaudieu the minister," he replied.

"Where did he give them to you?"

"At my home in Paris."

"When he handed them to you he must have told you whether the queen-mother would be pleased to see you."

"He told me nothing of the sort," replied Christophe. "He simply asked me to hand them to Queen Catherine in secret."

"You must have seen Chaudieu frequently, for him to know of your intended journey?"

"The minister did not learn from me that when I brought the two queens their furs I was also to ask the queen-mother for the sum she owes my father, and I had no time to ask him how he learned it."

"But these papers, which were handed to you without seal or cover, contained a proposed treaty between the rebels and Queen Catherine; you must have seen that they exposed you to the penalty awarded those persons who dabble in rebellion."

"Yes."

"The persons who persuaded you to undertake this act of high treason must have promised you a handsome reward and the queen-mother's protection."

"I did it from affection for Chaudieu, the only person whom I saw."

"Do you persist, then, in saying that you never saw the Prince de Condé?"

"I do."

"Did not the Prince de Condé tell you that the queen-mother was disposed to enter into his designs against Messieurs de Guise?"

"I never saw him."

"Beware! One of your confederates, La Renaudie, has been arrested. Courageous as he is, he did not hold out against the torture which awaits you, and he finally confessed that both he and the prince had an interview with you. If you wish to escape the agony of the question, I advise you to tell the simple truth. Perhaps you may in that way obtain a pardon."

Christophe replied that he could not assert something he had never known, nor manufacture accomplices when he had had none. Thereupon the provost gave the executioner a signal and withdrew to the adjoining room. At that signal, the wrinkles gathered on Christophe's forehead, his eyebrows contracted nervously, preparing for the suffering to come. His hands closed with such a violent contraction of the muscles that the nails sank into the flesh, and he was not conscious of it. The three men seized him, carried him to the camp-bed and laid him on it, letting his legs hang down. While the executioner fastened his body to that rough couch with stout cords, each of his assistants placed a leg in the *brodequins*. Then the cords were tightened with a crank, but without causing the reformer much

pain. When both legs were thus confined as in a vise, the executioner grasped his mallet and his wedges and looked from the victim to the clerk.

"Do you persist in your denial?" asked the clerk.

"I have told the truth," was Christophe's reply.

"Very well, do your duty," said the clerk, closing his eyes.

The cords were tightened with extreme force. That moment was, perhaps, the most painful of the torture; the flesh was suddenly and brutally compressed, and the blood forced upward into the trunk. The poor child could not refrain from uttering horrible shrieks, and seemed on the point of swooning. The doctor was called. He felt Christophe's pulse and bade the executioner to wait a quarter of an hour before driving the wedges, to allow time for the blood to become calm and for the victim's sensitiveness to be entirely restored. The clerk charitably suggested to Christophe that, if he could endure no better than that the bare beginning of the agony which he could not escape, it would be much wiser to confess; but Christophe replied only with these words:

"The king's tailor! the king's tailor!"

"What do you mean by that?" the clerk asked him.

"Realizing what torture I must endure," said Christophe, slowly, to gain time and an opportunity to rest, "I am summoning all my strength and trying to increase it by thinking of the martyrdom endured for the blessed cause of the Reformation by the late

king's tailor, to whom the question was administered in the presence of Madame la Duchesse de Valentinois and the king; I will try to be worthy of him!"

While the doctor was urging the victim not to compel a resort to extraordinary methods, the cardinal and the duke appeared, being impatient to learn the result of the examination, and appealed to Christophe to tell the truth forthwith. The furrier's son repeated the only admissions which he allowed himself to make, and which implicated Chaudieu alone. The two princes made a signal. At that signal, the executioner and his first assistant seized their mallets, each took a wedge and buried it between the boards; one stood at the right, the other at the left. The executioner was at the victim's knees, his assistant at the ankles. The eyes of the witnesses of this ghastly scene were fixed upon Christophe's, who, excited doubtless by the presence of those great personages, met their glances with other glances so inflamed with zeal that they seemed to glow like flame. When the next two wedges were driven home, he uttered a horrible groan. When he saw them take up the wedges for the extraordinary question, he held his peace, but his glance became so fixed and glaring, and cast a flash so penetrating at the two noblemen who were watching him, that they were obliged to lower their eyes. The same discomfiture was experienced by Philippe le Bel when he caused the torture of the lever to be applied to the Templars in his presence. That torture consisted in exposing the victim's chest to the blows

of one arm of the lever which worked the coiner's die, and which was provided with a leather pad. There was one knight whose glance was fixed so intently upon the king, that he was fascinated and could not remove his eyes from the sufferer's. At the third blow of the lever the king left the room, after he had heard his own summons to appear within the year at the judgment-seat of God, as he actually did.

At the fifth wedge, the first of the extraordinary question, Christophe said to the cardinal:

"Monseigneur, pray shorten my agony, it is useless."

The cardinal and the duke returned to the adjoining room, and Christophe heard Queen Catherine say:

"Go on, go on, for at best he is only a heretic!"

She deemed it prudent to appear more implacable than the executioners themselves against her accomplice.

The sixth and seventh wedges were driven in without a murmur from Christophe; his face shone with extraordinary radiance, due, doubtless, to the superhuman strength imparted by thoroughly kindled fanaticism. Where else but in sentiment could he find the courage necessary to endure such suffering? When the executioner took up the eighth wedge, Christophe actually smiled. This horrible scene had lasted more than an hour.

The clerk went to call the doctor, to ascertain if the eighth wedge could be driven without endangering

the patient's life. Meanwhile the duke returned to Christophe.

"*Ventre-de-biche!* you're a plucky fellow," he said in his ear. "I like brave men. Enter my service; you shall be rich and happy, and my favor will cure your mangled limbs; I will not ask you to do any dastardly thing, like going back to your party in order to divulge their plans to us; there are always traitors, the prisons of Blois afford proof enough of that; simply tell me on what terms the queen-mother and the Prince de Condé are."

"I know nothing about it, monseigneur," replied Lecamus.

The physician came, examined the victim, and said that he could endure the eighth wedge.

"Drive it home," said the cardinal. "After all, as the queen says, he is only a heretic," he added, bestowing a frightful smile upon Christophe.

Catherine came slowly from the adjoining room, stood in front of Christophe, and gazed coldly at him. She at once became the object of the attention of the two brothers, who scrutinized her and her accomplice alternately. That ambitious woman's whole future hung upon that solemn test; she felt a keen admiration for Christophe's courage, but the glance she cast upon him was stern and harsh; on the other hand, she hated the Guises, yet smiled upon them.

"Come, young man," she said, "admit that you have seen the Prince de Condé, and you will be handsomely rewarded."

"Ah! what a sorry business for you to be engaged in, madame!" exclaimed Christophe, in a pitying tone.

The queen started.

"He insults me! will you not hang him?" she said to the two brothers, who seemed absorbed in thought.

"What a woman!" said the grand master to himself, in the window recess, consulting his brother with a glance.

"I will remain in France, and I will be revenged on them," thought the queen.—"Proceed! let him confess, or let him die!" she exclaimed, addressing Monsieur de Montrésor.

The provost looked away and the executioners were occupied, so that Catherine was able to bestow upon the martyr a glance which was seen by no other person, and which fell upon Christophe like a refreshing dew. The great queen's eyes seemed to him moist; indeed, two tears did start from them, but were forced back and instantly dried. The wedge was driven in, and one of the boards between which it was driven, broke. Christophe emitted a fearful shriek, after which he made no sound, but displayed a radiant face: he believed that he was dying.

"Let him die?"—the cardinal repeated the queen's last words with an ironical intonation,—"no, indeed! We must not break this thread," he said to the provost.

The duke and the cardinal consulted in undertones.

"What shall we do with him?" asked the executioner.

"Send him to the prison at Orléans," said the duke; "but, above all things," he added, addressing Monsieur de Montrésor, "do not hang him without an order from me."

The excessively delicate sensibility produced in the internal organs by a resistance which necessitated the employment of all the force possessed by the human frame existed in the same degree in all Christophe's senses. He alone heard these words, which the Duc de Guise whispered in the cardinal's ear:

"I do not abandon the idea of getting at the truth through this young knave."

When the two princes had left the room, the executioners released their victim's legs, taking no precautions.

"Did anyone ever see a rascal with such strength?" said the chief to his assistants. "The fellow stood the eighth wedge; he ought to have died, and I lose the worth of his body."

"Release me without hurting me, my friends," said poor Christophe. "Some day I will reward you."

"Come, come, show some humanity!" exclaimed the doctor. "Monseigneur le Duc esteems this young man highly, and has commended him to me."

"I am going to Amboise with my assistants," said the executioner, brutally. "Take care of him yourself. Here comes the jailer."

The executioner disappeared, leaving Christophe in the hands of the honey-tongued doctor, who, assisted by the young man's future custodian, carried him to a bed, brought him some hot soup, fed him with it, sat beside him, felt his pulse, and talked consolingly to him.

"You will not die," he said. "You must feel great inward satisfaction in knowing that you have done your duty. The queen charged me to look to your welfare," he added, in a low voice.

"The queen is very kind," said Christophe, whose intense suffering had developed in him admirable clearness of vision, and who, after enduring such agony, did not propose to endanger the results of his devotion. "But she might well have spared me such extreme suffering by not turning me over to my persecutors, and telling them herself secrets of which I know nothing."

Upon hearing that reply, the doctor took his cap and cloak and left Christophe, concluding that he could obtain nothing from a man of his temper. The jailer of Blois ordered four men to place the poor child on a stretcher and transport him to the prison of the town, where Christophe fell into the profound sleep which is said to overtake almost all mothers after the horrible pains of childbirth.

⁂

When they caused the court to change its quarters to the château of Amboise, the two Lorraine princes hoped that the Prince de Condé, for whom they had laid a trap by inducing the king to order him to come to that place, would refuse to obey. As a vassal of the crown and a prince of the blood, Condé was bound to obey the king's commands. To neglect to go to Amboise constituted a felony; but, if he went there, he placed himself at the mercy of the crown. Now, at that moment, crown, council, court, all the elements of power were united in the hands of the Duc de Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine. At that delicate turn of affairs, the Prince de Condé displayed the decision and cunning which made him the worthy interpreter of the plans of Jeanne d'Albret and the doughty general of the Huguenots. He travelled in the rear of the conspirators to Vendôme, in order to support them in case of success. When that first armed uprising was brought to an end by the brief affray in which the flower of the nobles who had been led astray by Calvin lost their lives, the prince, with an escort of fifty gentlemen, arrived at the château of Amboise on the day following that affair which the shrewd and politic Lorraines called the Tumult of Amboise. Upon learning of the prince's arrival, the Lorraines sent the Maréchal de Saint-André to meet him, attended by a hundred

men-at-arms. When the Gascon and his escort reached the gate of the château, the marshal refused to allow the gentlemen in attendance on the prince to enter.

"You must enter alone, monseigneur," said Chancellor Olivier, the Cardinal de Tournon, and Birague, who were standing outside the portcullis.

"Why so?"

"You are suspected of felony," replied the chancellor.

The prince, seeing that his escort was surrounded by the Duc de Nemours, replied calmly:

"If that be so, I will enter my cousin's château alone and prove my innocence."

He dismounted and talked with perfect unconcern with Birague, the Cardinal de Tournon, Olivier, and the Duc de Nemours, whom he questioned as to the details of the tumult.

"Monseigneur," said the Duc de Nemours, "the rebels had confederates in Amboise. Captain Lanoue had admitted men-at-arms, who opened this gate to them, of which they made themselves masters, and through it they entered the town."

"That is to say, you let them into a bag," rejoined the prince, glancing at Birague.

"If they had been seconded by the attack which Captain Chaudieu, brother of the preacher at Paris, was to have made on the Bons-Hommes Gate, they would have succeeded," replied the Duc de Nemours; "but the Duc de Guise stationed me in such a way that Captain Chaudieu had to turn my

position to avoid a battle. Instead of arriving at night, as the others did, the rebel didn't come until dawn, when the king's troops were destroying the fellows who had entered the town."

"And you had a reserve force to take the gate that had been betrayed to them?"

"Monsieur le Maréchal de Saint-André was there, with five hundred men-at-arms."

The prince praised these military arrangements in the warmest terms.

"In order to have made his preparations as he did," he said, "the lieutenant-general must have known the secrets of the reformers. Those fellows were clearly betrayed."

The prince was subjected to indignity after indignity; after separating him from his friends at the gate of the château, the cardinal and chancellor barred his path when he walked toward the stairway leading to the king's apartments.

"We are instructed by the king, monseigneur, to escort you to your apartments."

"Am I a prisoner, pray?"

"If such were the king's purpose, you would not be attended by a prince of the Church and by myself," said the chancellor.

Those two functionaries escorted him to a suite of apartments where guards were sent to attend upon him, ostensibly as a mark of honor, and where he remained for several hours without seeing anybody. From his window he looked out upon the Loire and the fields which form such a lovely landscape from

Amboise to Tours; and he was musing over his situation, wondering what the Lorraines would dare to undertake against his person, when he heard the door of his chamber open, and Chicot, the king's jester, who had formerly belonged to him, made his appearance.

"I heard that you were in disgrace," said the prince.

"You would not believe how virtuous the court has become since the death of King Henri II."

"Why, the king should be fond of a hearty laugh."

"Which king? François II. or François de Lorraine?"

"Aren't you afraid of the duke, that you dare to speak so?"

"He won't punish me for that, monseigneur," Chicot replied, with a smile.

"And to what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"Why, aren't you entitled to it, judging from the manner of your arrival? I bring you my cap and bells."

"Am I not at liberty to go hence?"

"Try it!"

"And if I succeed?"

"I will say that you have won the game by playing contrary to the rule."

"Chicot, you frighten me. Are you sent to me by anyone who is interested in my welfare?"

Chicot said "yes" with a movement of his head. He walked toward him and gave him to understand

that somebody was watching them and listening to them.

"What have you to say to me?" inquired the prince.

"That audacity alone can extricate you from this fix, and that message is from the queen-mother," said the jester, breathing his words into the prince's ear.

"Say to those who sent you," replied the prince, "that I should not have come to this château, if I had had aught to fear or to reproach myself for."

"I hasten to report that brave reply!" cried the jester.

Two hours later, at one o'clock in the afternoon, before the king's dinner, the Cardinal de Tournon and the chancellor came to fetch the prince and present him to François II. in the great hall where the council had been held. There, before the noble court, the Prince de Condé feigned surprise at the marked coldness of the young king's greeting and asked its cause.

"You have been charged, cousin," said the queen-mother, sternly, "with having had a hand in the conspiracy of the reformers, and you must show yourself a loyal subject and good Catholic, if you do not wish to draw down the king's wrath upon your family."

When he heard these words, uttered amid the most profound silence by Catherine, who held the arm of the king, her son, while the Duc d'Orléans stood at her left, the prince stepped back, with a

movement instinct with pride, placed his hand on his sword, and looked about at all the persons who surrounded him.

"Whoever said that, madame," he exclaimed in an indignant tone, "lied in his throat!"

He threw his glove at the king's feet.

"Let the man who chooses to maintain that falsehood come forth!"

A thrill of excitement ran through the whole court when the Duc de Guise was seen to leave his place; but, instead of picking up the glove, as everybody supposed he would do, he walked up to the fearless hunchback.

"If you require a second, prince, do me the honor to accept my services," he said. "I will answer for you, and you shall show the Huguenots how mistaken they are if they think of taking you for their leader."

The prince was compelled to offer his hand to the lieutenant-general of the kingdom. Chicot picked up the glove and handed it to Monsieur de Condé.

"Cousin," said the young king, "you must not draw the sword except in defence of the crown; come to dinner."

The Cardinal de Lorraine, surprised by his brother's manœuvre, went with him to his apartments. The Prince de Condé having escaped the most serious danger that threatened him, gave his hand to Queen Mary Stuart to escort her to the dining-hall; but, while he was paying compliments

to the young queen, he tried to divine what trap the politic Le Balafré was setting for him at that moment. In vain did the prince cudgel his brains, he did not guess the duke's scheme until Queen Mary revealed it to him.

"It would have been a pity," she said, with a laugh, "to see so clever a head fall, and you must admit that my uncle is generous!"

"Yes, madame, for my head would not look well anywhere else than on my shoulders, although one of them is perceptibly higher than the other. But is it generosity on your uncle's part? Has he not obtained credit for that sentiment at small expense? Do you fancy that it is such a simple matter to prosecute a prince of the blood?"

"The end is not yet," she rejoined. "We shall see how you behave at the execution of the gentlemen prisoners, who are friends of yours, which the council has decided shall be carried out with the greatest publicity."

"I will do," said the prince, "whatever the king does."

"The king, the queen-mother, and myself propose to be present with the whole court and the ambassadors—"

"A fête?" queried the prince, ironically.

"Better than that," said the young queen, "an *act of faith*, an act of high political significance. It is a question of forcing the nobles of France to submit to the crown and of destroying their liking for factious opposition and intriguing."

"You will not abate their bellicose spirit by showing them that they incur such risks, madame, and you stake the crown itself in the game," replied the prince.

At the close of the dinner, which was gloomy enough, Queen Mary had the deplorable hardihood to lead the conversation to the trial then in progress of the noblemen taken with arms in their hands, and to recur to the necessity of making the greatest possible display at their execution.

"Madame," said François II., "is it not enough for the King of France to know that the blood of so many excellent gentlemen is to be shed? must we make a triumphal show of them?"

"No, sire, but an example," said Catherine.

"Your grandfather and your father were accustomed to witness the burning of heretics," said Mary Stuart.

"The kings who reigned before me did as they chose, and I propose to do as I choose," rejoined the king.

"Philip II., who certainly is a great monarch," observed Catherine, "being recently in the Low Countries, caused an *auto-da-fé* to be postponed until he had returned to Valladolid."

"What do you think about it, cousin?" the king asked the Prince de Condé.

"If you cannot avoid being present, sire, you must have the papal nuncio there and the ambassadors. I will willingly go myself, since I know that the ladies are to attend the fête."

The Prince de Condé had resolved upon a bold course at a glance from Catherine de' Medici.

About the time that the prince reached the château of Amboise, the furrier to the two queens also arrived from Paris, brought thither by the anxiety which the circumstances of the tumult had aroused in his family and Lallier's. When the old man presented himself at the gate of the château, and announced that he was the queen's furrier, the captain said to him:

"If you want to be hanged, my good man, you have only to step foot in the courtyard."

At those words, the father, in despair, seated himself on a barrier a few yards away, and waited, in the hope that some retainer of one of the two queens would pass, or some female attendant, who could give him news of his son. But he sat there all day long without seeing a person whom he knew; and was compelled at last to go down into the town, where he obtained lodgings, not without difficulty, in a tavern on the square where public executions took place. He was obliged to pay a livre per day for a room looking on the square. The next day he had the courage to witness, from his window, the execution of the abettors of the uprising, who had been sentenced to be broken on the wheel or hanged, as persons of small consequence. The syndic of the guild of furriers was overjoyed not to recognize his son among them. When the execution was at an end, he went out to waylay the clerk. After he had given his name and thrust a purse filled with crowns

into the man's hand, he begged him to look and see if one Christophe Lecamus had been included in either of the three preceding executions. The clerk was touched by the despairing father's tone and manner, and took him to his house. After a careful examination, he assured the old man that the said Christophe was not among those who had theretofore been executed, nor among those who were to be put to death on the following days.

"My dear master," he said to the syndic, "the Parliament has undertaken the prosecution of the noblemen implicated in the affair and of the principal leaders. So perhaps your son is detained in the dungeons at the château, and will figure in the magnificent execution their lordships the Duc de Guise and Cardinal de Lorraine have in preparation. Twenty-seven barons, eleven counts, and seven marquises are to be beheaded,—in all, fifty noblemen or leaders of the reformers. As the courts of the comté of Touraine have no connection with the Parliament of Paris, if you are determined to have news of your son, go to see Monseigneur le Chancelier Olivier, who, by order of the lieutenant-general of the kingdom, has the management of the prosecution."

The poor old man went three times to see the chancellor, and stood in line in the courtyard in company with a great number of persons who were soliciting mercy for their kindred; but as titled persons took precedence of bourgeois, he was obliged to abandon his purpose of speaking to the chancellor,

whom he saw several times leaving his house to go to the château, or to attend the sessions of the commission appointed by the Parliament, and passing through long lines of petitioners whom the guards compelled to stand back to give him room to pass. It was a horrible scene of desolation, for there were women among the petitioners, mothers and daughters, whole families in tears. Old Lecamus squandered a great deal of money on the servants of the château, begging them to deliver letters which he wrote, sometimes to Dayelle, Queen Mary's maid, sometimes to the queen-mother's maid; but the servants took the goodman's gold, and delivered the letters to the provost of the château, as the cardinal bade them do. As the Guises behaved with incredible cruelty, they had every reason to fear acts of revenge, and they never took more precautions than during this sojourn of the court at Amboise, so that neither the most potent instrument of corruption, gold, nor the greatest activity brought the syndic of the furriers any information concerning his son's fate. He wandered about the town with a gloomy air, scrutinizing the preparations which the cardinal was making on a vast scale for the terrible spectacle at which the Prince de Condé was to be present.

Public curiosity, from Paris to Nantes, was stimulated by the methods in vogue at that period. The execution had been announced from the pulpit by all the vicars and curés, simultaneously with the king's victory over the heretics. Three handsome tribunes,

the one in the middle being more sumptuous than the others, were built against the wall of the château of Amboise, at the foot of which the execution was to take place. Around the square were erected board seats, tier above tier, which were filled by an enormous crowd, drawn thither by the publicity given to this *auto-da-fé*. About ten thousand persons camped in the surrounding fields on the night before the ghastly spectacle was to take place. The roofs were black with people, and windows were let for ten livres, an enormous sum in those days. The poor father had, as we have seen, one of the best places from which to obtain an unobstructed view of the stage upon which so many noblemen were to perish, and in the centre of which he saw a tall scaffold draped with black. On the morning of the fatal day, the *chouquet*—the block on which the victim placed his head after he had knelt—was put in place; then an armchair, draped in black, for the clerk of the Parliament, whose duty it was to call the names of the culprits and announce their sentences. The enclosure was guarded from early morning by the Scottish Guards and by the gendarmes of the king's household, to prevent the crowd from overflowing it before the execution.

After a solemn mass at the château and in the churches of the town, the noblemen were brought forth, the last remaining conspirators. These noblemen, some of whom had already undergone the question, were assembled at the foot of the

scaffold and attended by monks who strove to persuade them to renounce the doctrines of Calvin; but not one of them listened to the words of those men who were sent to them by the Cardinal de Lorraine, and among whom they feared, doubtless, to find spies of the Lorraines. In order to escape the persecutions of their antagonists, they sang a psalm put into French verse by Clément Marot. Calvin, as is well known, had ordained that worship should be conducted in each country in the language of that country, not only as a matter of common sense, but as a method of assailing the Roman worship. It was an affecting incident to those in the crowd who had a feeling of pity for those gentlemen, to hear them singing this stanza just as the court arrived:

"Dieu nous soit doux et favorable,
Nous bénissant par sa bonté,
Et de son visage adorable
Nous fasse luire la clarté."*

The eyes of all the reformers were at once turned upon their leader, the Prince de Condé, who was designedly placed between Queen Mary and the Duc d'Orléans. Queen Catherine de' Medici sat next her son, with the cardinal at her left. The papal nuncio was standing behind the queens. The lieutenant-general of the kingdom was on horseback below the tribunes with two marshals of France and

*"O Lord to us Thy mercy show,
And bless us with Thy grace,
On us of Thy good will bestow
The radiance of Thy face."

his captains. When the Prince de Condé appeared, all of the gentlemen to be decapitated who knew him saluted him, and the fearless hunchback returned their salutation.

"It is hard," he said to the Duc d'Orléans, "not to be courteous to men who are about to die."

The other two tribunes were filled by persons invited to witness the spectacle, and by the courtiers and persons on duty at the court. In a word, the whole population of the château of Blois was present, passing from joyous festivities to scenes of death, just as it passed later from the pleasures of the court to the perils of war, with a lightness of heart that will always be to foreigners one of the governing considerations of their policy toward France. The unhappy syndic of the furriers of Paris felt the keenest joy when he saw that his son was not among the fifty-seven gentlemen condemned to death.

At a signal from the Duc de Guise, the clerk, from his place on the scaffold, at once called out, in a loud voice:

"Jean-Louis-Albéric, Baron de Raunay, convicted of heresy, of the crime of lèse-majesté, and of an assault with arms in his hand upon the king's person."

A tall, handsome man ascended the scaffold with an assured step, saluted the crowd and the court, and exclaimed:

"The sentence states what is false; I took up arms to deliver the king from his enemies the Lorraines!"

He placed his head on the block and it fell.

The reformers sang:

"Dieu, tu nous a mis à l'épreuve
Et tu nous as examinés;
Comme l'argent que l'on épreuve,
Par feu tu nous as affinés."*

"Robert-Jean-René Briquemaut, Comte de Villemongis, convicted of the crime of lèse-majesté and of an assault upon the king's person," called the clerk.

The count dipped his hands in Baron du Raunay's blood, and said:

"May this blood fall upon the real culprits!"

The reformers sang:

"Tu nous as fait entrer et joindre
Aux piéges de nos ennemis,
Tu nous as fait les reins astreindre,
Des filets où tu nous as mis."†

"You must agree, monsieur le nonce," said the Prince de Condé to the nuncio, "that if French gentlemen know how to conspire, they also know how to die."

*"Thou, Lord, hast tried us more and more
And probed our least desire;
As finers test the precious ore,
So we are proved by fire."

†"Thy hand has led our feet, O Lord,
Within our foes' fell snare,
Our loins endure the toils' harsh cord,
'Tis Thou hast brought us there."

"What detestation you are drawing on the heads of our children, brother!" said the Duchesse de Guise to the Cardinal de Lorraine.

"This spectacle makes me ill," said the young king, who had turned deathly pale at the sight of so much bloodshed.

"Bah! rebels!" rejoined Catherine de' Medici.

They could still hear the singing, and the axe moved constantly through the air. At last, that sublime spectacle of men going to their death singing, and above all, the impression produced upon the crowd by the progressive diminution of the volume of the singing, made them forget for a moment the dread inspired by the Guises.

"Mercy!" cried the people in one voice, when they could hear the feeble tones of only one nobleman, the most considerable of them all, who had been reserved for the last stroke.

He was alone at the foot of the ladder leading to the scaffold, and he sang:

> "Dieu nous soit doux et favorable,
> Nous bénissant par sa bonté,
> Et de son visage adorable
> Nous fasse luire la clarté."

"Come, Duc de Nemours," said the Prince de Condé, weary of the part he was playing, "do not you, to whom we owe the happy result of the affray, and who assisted in taking these men,—do not you deem yourself in duty bound to ask mercy for this one? It is Castelnau, who, as I am told, received

your word that he should be treated courteously if he surrendered."

"Can it be that I have waited until he was on that scaffold before trying to save him?" said the Duc de Nemours, deeply affected by that stern reproof.

The clerk called slowly—purposely so, no doubt:

"Michel-Jean-Louis, Baron de Castelnau-Chalosse, accused and convicted of the crime of lèse-majesté and of an assault upon the king's person."

"No," said Castelnau, proudly, "it cannot be a crime to oppose the tyranny and projected usurpation of the Guises!"

The tired executioner observing a commotion in the tribune, busied himself adjusting his axe.

"Monsieur le Baron," he said, "I don't wish to make you suffer too much, and a moment more may save you."

Again all the people cried:

"Mercy!"

"So be it!" said the king; "mercy to poor Castelnau, who saved the life of the Duc d'Orléans."

The cardinal intentionally misunderstood the words *so be it*. He gave the executioner a signal, so that Castelnau's head fell while the king was pardoning him.

"That one goes to your account, cardinal," said Catherine.

On the day following that horrible slaughter, the Prince de Condé started for Navarre.

The affair created a great sensation in France and at all foreign courts; but the torrents of noble blood which were shed on that occasion caused the Chancellor Olivier such poignant suffering, that that excellent magistrate, discerning at last the goal toward which the Guises were tending on the pretext of defending the throne and the religion, did not feel strong enough to hold his own against them. Although he was their creature, he did not choose to sacrifice both his duty and the monarchy to them, so he withdrew from public life, commending L'Hôpital to them as his successor. Catherine, when she heard of Olivier's selection, proposed Birague for chancellor and displayed excessive warmth in soliciting the place for him. The cardinal, who knew nothing of the letter written by L'Hôpital to Catherine, and who believed him to be still loyal to the House of Lorraine, put him forward as Birague's competitor, and the queen-mother pretended to allow him to be imposed upon her. Immediately upon assuming the office, L'Hôpital took measures against the importation of the Inquisition into France, which the Cardinal de Lorraine wished to effect, and thwarted so effectually all the anti-French political manœuvres of the Guises, he showed himself such a loyal Frenchman, that, three months after his appointment, they were obliged to exile him to his estate of Vignay near Etampes, in order to humble him.

Goodman Lecamus waited impatiently for the court to leave Amboise, for he had been unable to find

CATHERINE TO LECAMUS

The syndic disguised himself as a beggar, at the risk of being taken for a spy.

Thus the old man was enabled to attract Catherine
[illegible], but [illegible] as she recognised
[illegible] indignation.
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[illegible] poignant suffering, that that [illegible] discerning at last the goal to- [illegible] pretending on the pretext [illegible] crone and the religion, did not feel [illegible] them. Al- [illegible] their creature, he did not choose to sacrifice [illegible] his duty and the monarchy to them, [illegible] public life, commending L'Hô- pital [illegible] them as his successor. Catherine, when she [illegible] proposed [illegible] for [illegible] displayed excessive warmth in solicit- [illegible] for him. The cardinal, who knew nothing of the letter written by L'Hôpital to Cath- [illegible] House of Lorraine [illegible] tor, and the queen-mother pretended to allow [illegible] be imposed upon her. Immediately upon [illegible] the office, L'Hôpital took measures against [illegible] rtation of the Inquisition into France, [illegible] Cardinal de Lorraine wished to effect, and [illegible] effectually all the anti-French political [illegible] man, that, three months after his ap- [illegible] were obliged to exile him to his [illegible]

[illegible] waited impatiently for the court [illegible]

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CATHERINE TO LECAMUS

The syndic disguised himself as a beggar, at the risk of being taken for a spy.

* * * * *

Thus the old man was enabled to warn Catherine of Medici's attempt, and to save his life as she recognized him and assured him of her gratitude.

"Go with God, goodman."

CATHERINE TO LECAMUS

The synodic disguised himself as a beggar, at the risk of being taken for a spy.

* * * * * * * * *

Thus the old man was enabled to attract Catherine de' Medici's attention; but as soon as she recognised him, she assumed an indignant air.

"Off with you, goodman."



any opportunity to speak either to Queen Mary or to Queen Catherine, and his purpose was to station himself in the path of the court when they returned along the river bank to Blois. The syndic disguised himself as a beggar, at the risk of being taken for a spy, and under cover of that disguise he was able to go among the unfortunate creatures who lined the road. After the departure of the Prince de Condé, the duke and the cardinal believed that they had imposed silence on the Huguenots, and left the queen-mother a little more freedom. Lecamus knew that Catherine, instead of travelling in a litter, loved to ride *à la planchette*—such was the name then given to the stirrup invented for or by Catherine, who had once injured her leg, and who rode with both feet resting on a sort of pack-saddle covered with velvet, sitting sidewise on the horse's back and passing one leg through a notch in the saddle. As the queen had very shapely legs, she was accused of having invented that fashion in order to show them.—Thus the old man was enabled to attract Catherine de' Medici's attention; but as soon as she recognized him, she assumed an indignant air.

"Off with you, goodman, and let no one see you speaking to me," she said with something very like anxiety. "Procure your own election as deputy to the States-General by the assemblage of guilds of Paris, and be on my side in the session at Orléans; then you will know whom to rely upon in respect to your son."

"Is he still living?" asked the old man.

"Alas! I hope so," said the queen.

Lecamus was obliged to return to Paris with naught but those unsatisfactory words, and with the secret that the States-General were to be convoked, which the queen had just divulged to him.

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Within a few days the cardinal had obtained evidence of the culpability of the court of Navarre. At Lyon, at Mouvans, in Dauphiné, some Huguenots commanded by the most enterprising prince of the House of Bourbon had tried to raise the people. Such audacity, after the bloody executions at Amboise, astonished the Lorraine princes, who, in order to have done with the heresy by means which they carefully kept secret, proposed to convoke the States-General at Orléans. Catherine de' Medici, who fancied that she saw a possible prop to her policy in popular representation, joyfully consented. The cardinal, who wished to seize his prey once more and crush the House of Bourbon, had no other purpose in convoking the States than to secure the attendance of the Prince de Condé and the King of Navarre, Antoine de Bourbon, father of Henri IV.; and he proposed to make use of Christophe to convict the prince of high treason, if he should succeed in enticing him into the king's power.

After two months in prison at Blois, Christophe was carried one morning on a stretcher to a boat, placed on a bed, and taken up the river to Orléans by favor of a westerly wind. He arrived during the evening, and was taken to the celebrated Saint-Aignan Tower. Having no means of knowing what to think concerning his transfer, he could devote all

his thoughts to his conduct and his future. He lay there two months more on his cot, unable to move his legs. His bones were broken. When he asked for the services of a surgeon from the town, the jailer replied that his orders with respect to him were so strict that he could not even allow any other person to bring him his food. This severity, the effect of which was to keep him in secret confinement, surprised Christophe; according to his ideas, he should either be hanged or released, for he knew nothing of the events at Amboise.

Notwithstanding the urgent advice to remain at home which Catherine de' Medici secretly sent them, the two Bourbon princes determined to attend the meeting of the States-General, the king's autograph letters had given them such a sense of security; and when the court was installed at Orléans, it was learned, not without astonishment, from Groslot, Chancellor of Navarre, that the princes had arrived.

François II. took up his abode in the palace of the Chancellor of Navarre, who was also Bailli of Orléans. This Groslot, whose double office is one of the peculiar features of a period when Huguenots possessed abbeys,—Groslot, the Jacques Cœur of Orléans, and one of the wealthiest bourgeois of that town, did not leave his name to his palace; it was afterward called the *bailliage*, for it was undoubtedly purchased from his heirs by the crown, or by the provincial government as a home for that tribunal. That charming structure, which we owe to

the bourgeois of the sixteenth century, is a fitting complement to the history of that period, when king, nobility, and bourgeoise contested with one another the palm for the grace, refinement, and richness of their dwellings—witness Varangeville, the superb manor-house of Ango, and the so-called Hôtel d'Hercules in Paris, which is still standing in our day, but in a condition to drive archæologists and admirers of the Middle Ages to despair. It is difficult to go to Orléans without noticing the hôtel de ville on Place de l'Estape. That hôtel de ville is the former *bailliage*, the Hôtel Groslot, the most illustrious house in Orléans and the most neglected.

The remains of that edifice inform the eyes of the archæologist how magnificent it was at a time when bourgeois houses were built much more frequently of wood than of stone, and when none but noblemen had the right to build *manors*—a significant word. To have been selected as the king's place of sojourn at a period when the court displayed so much magnificence and pomp, the Hôtel Groslot must have been the largest and finest house in Orléans. It was on Place de l'Estape that the Guises and the king passed in review the civic guard, to which Monsieur de Cypierre was assigned as commander during the king's residence. At that time, the Cathedral of Sainte-Croix—subsequently completed by Henri IV., who chose to offer that pledge of the sincerity of his conversion—was in process of construction, and its neighborhood, strewn with blocks of stone and encumbered with piles of boards, was

occupied by the Guises, who had their quarters in the bishop's palace, since demolished.

The town was under military occupation, and the measures taken by the Lorraines indicated how little freedom of action they proposed to leave to the States-General, whose members flooded the city and caused a rise in rents, even in the meanest hovels. The court, the bourgeois militia, the nobility, and the bourgeoisie anticipated some *coup d'Etat*, and their anticipation was fulfilled when the princes of the blood arrived. When the two princes entered the royal chamber, the courtiers stood aghast at the insolence of the Cardinal de Lorraine, who, in order to proclaim his pretensions aloud, remained covered, while the King of Navarre stood before him with uncovered head. At that, Catherine de' Medici turned her eyes away in order not to betray her indignation. Thereupon ensued a solemn explanation between the young king and the two chiefs of the younger branch; it was brief, for the Prince de Condé had hardly opened his mouth to speak, when François II. put an end to the interview with these terrible words:

"Messieurs my cousins, I had supposed that the Amboise affair was at an end; I see that I was mistaken, and that you wish to make us regret our indulgent treatment of you!"

"It is not the king who is speaking, so much as Messieurs de Guise," retorted the Prince de Condé.

"Adieu, monsieur," said the little king, purple with wrath.

In the great hall the prince's path was blocked by the two captains of the guards. When the captain of the French company stepped forward, the prince drew a letter from his breast, and said to him before the whole court:

"Will you kindly read this for me, Monsieur de Maillé-Brézé?"

"Willingly," said the captain.

"'Cousin, come in all confidence, I give you my royal word that you may safely do so. If you need a safe-conduct, these presents will serve the purpose.'"

"Signed?" said the shrewd and intrepid hunchback.

"Signed: 'François,'" said Maillé.

"No, no," said the prince, "it is: 'Your affectionate cousin and friend, François!'—Messieurs," he cried to the Scottish Guards, "I follow you to the prison to which you have been ordered by the king to conduct me. There is enough nobility of soul in this hall to understand that!"

The profound silence which reigned throughout the hall might well have put the Guises on their guard; but silence is what princes listen to with least attention.

"Monseigneur," said the Cardinal de Tournon, following the prince, "since the affair at Amboise, you have engaged in enterprises against the royal authority at Lyon, and at Mouvans in Dauphiné, of which the king had no knowledge when he wrote you in those terms."

"Sharpers!" exclaimed the prince, with a laugh.

"You made a public declaration against the mass, and in favor of heresy."

"We are masters in Navarre," said the prince.

"In Béarn, you mean?" interposed President de Thou. "But you owe homage to the crown."

"Ah! so you are here, president?" sneered the prince. "Is the whole Parliament with you?"

With that, the prince cast a contemptuous glance at the cardinal, and left the hall; he realized that they proposed to have his head. On the following day, when Messieurs de Thou, de Viole, d'Espesse, Bourdin the procureur-general, and du Tillet the chief clerk entered his prison, he kept them standing while he expressed his regret to see them entrusted with a matter wholly out of their jurisdiction; then he said to the clerk:

"Write!"

And he dictated this:

"I, Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, peer of the realm, Marquis de Conti, Comte de Soissons, prince of the royal blood of France, do declare that I absolutely refuse to recognize the authority of any commission appointed to sit in judgment upon me, since, by virtue of my rank and of the privilege inherent in every member of the royal family, I may be accused, heard, and tried only by the Parliament of Paris, attended by all the peers, all the different chambers, and presided over by the king sitting on his bed of justice."

"You must know that better than anyone else,

messieurs; it is all that you will hear from me. For the rest, I place my trust in God and my right."

The magistrates proceeded, notwithstanding the prince's obstinate silence. The King of Navarre was at liberty, but was closely watched; his prison was somewhat larger than his brother's, but that was the only difference between their respective positions; for it was intended that both their heads should fall at the same blow.

Christophe was kept so carefully in secret confinement by the orders of the cardinal and the lieutenant-general of the kingdom, simply for the purpose of giving the magistrates evidence of the prince's culpability. The letters seized upon La Sagne, the prince's secretary, although intelligible to statesmen, were not sufficiently explicit for judges. The cardinal had meditated upon the plan of arranging a chance meeting between the prince and Christophe, who had been placed, not without design, in a lower room of the Saint-Aignan Tower, with a window looking on the courtyard. On the occasion of every examination to which the magistrates subjected him, he took refuge in a system of absolute denial, which naturally prolonged the trial until the opening of the States.

Lecamus, who had not failed to procure his own election as deputy of the Third Estate by the bourgeoisie of Paris, reached Orléans a few days after the prince's arrest. That news, which he learned at Etampes, redoubled his anxiety, for he, who alone knew of the interview between the prince and his

son under Pont au Change, understood that Christophe's fate was bound up with that of the audacious leader of the Reformation. So he determined to study the obscure, involved interests which began to clash at court immediately upon the opening of the States, in order to devise some method of saving his son. He could not think of Queen Catherine, for she refused to see her furrier. Not one of the persons connected with the court whom he was able to approach gave him any satisfactory news concerning his son, and he had reached such a pitch of desperation that he was on the point of appealing to the cardinal himself, when he learned that Monsieur de Thou had consented—and it is an indelible blot upon his career—to act as one of the Prince de Condé's judges. The syndic went to see his son's patron, and learned that Christophe was still alive, but a prisoner.

Tourillon the glover, to whom La Renaudie had recommended Christophe, had offered Sieur Lecamus a room in his house throughout the session of the States. The glover believed the furrier to be, like himself, secretly attached to the Reformed religion; but he soon discovered that a father who fears for his son's life does not understand fine religious distinctions, but throws himself desperately upon God's bosom, heedless of the color of the scarf which men place upon Him. The old man, foiled in all his attempts to gain information, walked through the streets like a man in a trance; contrary to his expectations, his gold availed him nothing; Monsieur de Thou had warned him that, if he should

bribe a retainer of the Guises, he would simply throw his money away, for the duke and the cardinal allowed nothing to transpire concerning Christophe. That magistrate, whose glory is somewhat tarnished by the rôle he played at that crisis, had tried to give the despairing father some hope; but he was so alarmed himself for his godson's life that his words of consolation only alarmed the furrier more. The old man prowled around the house. In three months he had grown wofully thin. He based his only hope upon the warm friendship which had long existed between himself and the Hippocrates of the sixteenth century, Ambroise Paré. The surgeon tried to say a word to Queen Mary on leaving the king's room; but as soon as he mentioned Christophe's name, the daughter of the Stuarts, irritated by contemplation of her probable fate if anything should happen to the king, and believing that he had been poisoned by the reformers, because of the opportune suddenness of his illness, replied:

"If my uncles had listened to me, such a fanatic would have been hanged long ago!"

On the evening when that ominous reply was communicated to Lecamus by his friend Paré, on Place de l'Estape, he returned to his room, half-dead, and refused to take any supper.

Tourillon, being troubled about him, went up to his room and found him in tears; and as the poor furrier's old eyes showed the flesh on the under side of the inflamed, wrinkled eyelids, the glover thought that he was weeping blood.

"Take comfort, father," said the reformer, "the bourgeois of Orléans are furious to see their city treated as if it had been taken by assault, patrolled by Monsieur de Cypierre's troops; and, if the Prince de Condé's life were in danger, we would soon pull down the Saint-Aignan Tower; for our whole city is for the Reformation, and will rise in rebellion,—I promise you that!"

"Even if you should hang the Lorraines, would their death give me back my son?" rejoined the despairing father.

At that moment there was a gentle tap at Tourillon's door, and the glover himself went down to answer it. It was quite dark. In those troublous times, every householder took the most minute precautions. Tourillon looked out through the bars of the wicket in his door, and saw a stranger, dressed in black, whose accent betrayed an Italian. He asked to speak to Lecamus on matters of business, and Tourillon admitted him. At sight of the stranger the furrier was terribly startled, but the stranger found time to put his finger to his lips. Lecamus understood the gesture, and said to him:

"I suppose you have come to offer me some furs?"

"*Si*," the stranger replied discreetly, in Italian.

The new-comer was the famous Ruggieri, astrologer to the queen-mother. Tourillon went down to his own quarters, realizing that his presence in his guest's room was inopportune.

"Where can we talk without having reason to

fear that we may be overheard?" said the prudent Florentine.

"We must go into the open fields for that," Lecamus replied; "but they won't let us leave the city; you know how strictly the gates are guarded. No one is allowed to go out without a pass from Monsieur de Cypierre, even a member of the States, like myself. To-morrow, at our session, we all propose to complain of this abridgment of our liberty."

"Work like a mole, but never let your paws be seen in anything you do," said the crafty Florentine. "To-morrow will undoubtedly be the decisive day. If my observations are correct, you will have your son again to-morrow or the next day."

"May God hear you, who are supposed to consult the devil only!"

"Come to my quarters," said the astrologer, smiling. "For watching the stars I have the tower of Sieur Touchet de Beauvais, the lieutenant of the *bailliage*, whose little daughter has caught the fancy of the little Duc d'Orléans. I have cast the child's horoscope, and it really indicates that she will be a great lady and loved by a king. The lieutenant is an intelligent man, he is devoted to the sciences, so the queen procured apartments for me in his house; he is bright enough to be a fanatical *Guisard* pending the accession of Charles IX."

The furrier and the astrologer betook themselves to Sieur de Beauvais's abode without meeting anybody or being seen; but, in case Lecamus's visit

should be discovered, the Florentine proposed to account for it as an astrological consultation concerning Christophe's fate. When they had reached the upper floor of the turret, where the astrologer's study was, Lecamus said to him:

"Is my son surely alive?"

"Thus far," replied Ruggieri, "but his life is still to be saved. Hark ye, dealer in skins; I would not give two sous for your life, if you should ever, while you live, repeat a single syllable of what I am about to say to you."

"An unnecessary warning, my good sir; I have been furrier to the court since the time of King Louis XII., and this is the fourth reign I have seen."

"You will soon say the fifth," observed Ruggieri.

"What do you know of my son?"

"Well, he has been put to the question."

"Poor boy!" said the goodman, raising his eyes to Heaven.

"His knees and ankles were crushed a bit; but he has earned the protection of a royal personage which will extend over his whole life," said the Florentine hastily, observing the father's dismay. "Your little Christophe has rendered a service to our great Queen Catherine. If we extricate your son from the clutches of the Lorraines, you will see him a counsellor in the parliament some day. A man might suffer all his bones to be broken thrice to win the good graces of that dear sovereign, a transcendent genius who will triumph over all obstacles! I

have cast the Duc de Guise's horoscope: he will be killed within a year!—Let us see—Christophe saw the Prince de Condé—"

"Do not you, who know the future, know the past as well?" said the furrier.

"I am not questioning you, my good friend, I am telling you the fact. Now, if your son, who will be placed in the prince's path to-morrow, recognizes him, or if the prince recognizes your son, Monsieur de Condé's head will fall. God knows what will become of his accomplice! But never fear. Neither your son nor the prince will be put to death; I have cast their horoscopes, and they will live; but I cannot say by what means they will extricate themselves from the affair. Leaving the certainty of my calculations out of the question, we must do what we can. To-morrow the prince will receive by a trustworthy hand a book of prayers, in which we shall send him a word of warning. God grant that your son may be discreet, for he will not be forewarned! A single glance of recognition will cost the prince his life. And so, although the queen-mother has every reason to rely on Christophe's fidelity—"

"She has put it to some severe tests!" cried the furrier.

"Do not speak so! Do you fancy the queen is happy? She proposes to take measures as if the Guises had determined on the prince's death; and she does well, wise and prudent queen that she is! Now, she relies upon you for assistance in everything. You have some influence in the third estate,

representing the associated guilds of Paris, and although the Guisards may promise to set your son free, try to cozen them and incite your Order against the Lorraines. Ask that the queen-mother be made regent; the King of Navarre will give his assent publicly in the session of the States."

"But the king?"

"The king will die," Ruggieri replied. "I have cast his horoscope. What the queen asks you to do for her in the States is very simple; but she expects a greater service from you. You assisted the great Ambroise Paré in his studies, you are his friend—"

"Ambroise cares more for the Duc de Guise to-day than for me, and he is quite right, for he owes his position to him; but he is loyal to the king. And so, although he is inclined toward the Reformation, he will do nothing contrary to his duty."

"The devil take these honest men!" cried the Florentine. "Ambroise boasted this evening that he would cure the little king. If the king recovers his health, the Guises will triumph, the princes will lose their lives, the House of Bourbon will come to an end, we shall return to Florence, your son will be hanged, and the Lorraines will find it easy to deal with the other sons of France."

"Great God!" cried Lecamus.

"Do not exclaim thus: it is like a bourgeois who knows nothing of the court; but go at once to Ambroise and find out from him what he intends to do to save the king's life. If he professes any certainty,

do you come to me and describe the operation in which he has so much faith."

"But—" Lecamus began.

"Obey blindly, my dear fellow; otherwise you will be bewildered."

"He is right," thought the furrier.

And he went in search of the king's first surgeon, who was quartered at an inn on Place du Martroi.

At that moment, Catherine de' Medici was in a political extremity similar to that in which Christophe had seen her at Blois. Though she had girded up her loins for the struggle, though she had exerted her lofty intelligence in that first discomfiture, her situation, although practically the same, was even more critical and more perilous than at the time of the Tumult of Amboise. Events had progressed no less than the woman. Although she seemed to be acting in harmony with the two Lorraine princes, Catherine held in her hand the threads of a cunningly devised plot against her formidable associates, and only awaited a propitious moment to throw away the mask. The cardinal had just obtained positive proof that Catherine was deceiving him. The wily Italian had fixed upon the younger branch as a suitable obstacle to oppose to the pretensions of the Guises; and, despite the advice of the two Gondis, who urged her to allow the Guises to come to blows with the Bourbons, she had thwarted, by warning the Queen of Navarre, the plan which they had formed in concert with Spain, to seize upon Béarn. As that State secret was

known only to themselves and the queen-mother, the two Lorraine princes, certain of the duplicity of their ally, determined to send her back to Florence; and, to leave no doubt of Catherine's treason to the State,—the House of Lorraine was the State,—the duke and the cardinal had entrusted to her their design of ridding themselves of the King of Navarre. The precautions instantly taken by Antoine de Bourbon proved to the two brothers that that secret, known only to themselves and to the queen-mother, had been divulged by her. The Cardinal de Lorraine forthwith taxed the queen-mother with her faithlessness, in presence of François II., threatening her with an edict of banishment in case that any fresh indiscretion on her part should endanger the State. Catherine, being in extreme peril, bore herself like a great king. She demonstrated her exalted capabilities; but we must confess that she was well served by her close friends. L'Hôpital sent to the queen a note in these words:

"Do not allow a prince of the blood to be put to death by a commission, or they will soon make away with you also!"

Catherine sent Birague to Vignay to bid the chancellor attend the session of the States, despite his disgrace. Birague arrived within three leagues of Orléans that very night, with L'Hôpital, who thus declared himself on the queen-mother's side. Chiverni, whose loyalty had by this time, and with good reason, begun to be suspected by Messieurs de

Guise, had made his escape from Orléans, and by hard riding, which nearly cost him his life, had reached Ecouen in ten hours. He informed the Connétable de Montmorency of the perilous plight of his nephew, the Prince de Condé, and of the audacity of the Lorraines. Anne de Montmorency, furious to learn that the prince owed his life only to the sudden appearance of the disease of which François II. eventually died, set out for Orléans with fifteen hundred horse and a hundred noblemen. In order to surprise Messieurs de Guise more completely, he avoided Paris, going from Ecouen to Corbeil, and from Corbeil to Pithiviers by the valley of the Essonne.

"Captain against captain, there will be some work to do," he observed on the occasion of that bold march.

Anne de Montmorency, who had saved France at the time that Charles V. invaded Provence, and the Duc de Guise, who had checked the emperor's second invasion at Metz, were, in truth, the two greatest soldiers in France at this time. Catherine had waited until the most opportune moment to kindle the hatred of the constable, who had been disgraced by the influence of the Lorraines. However, the Marquis de Simeuse, commanding at Gien, upon learning of the arrival of a force so considerable as the constable's, rode off to the Duc de Guise, hoping to be able to warn him in time.

The queen-mother, feeling sure that the constable would come to the assistance of his nephew, and

relying confidently on the chancellor's devotion to the king's cause, had revived the hopes and the insolence of the party of the Reformation. The Colignys and the friends of the imperilled House of Bourbon had made common cause with the queen-mother's partisans. A coalition between common interests attacked by a common enemy was secretly formed in the States-General, where it was openly proposed to make Catherine regent of the kingdom in case of the death of François II. Catherine, whose faith in judicial astrology exceeded her faith in the Church, had dared to take any measures against her oppressors, when she saw her son actually dying at the expiration of the time fixed by the sorceress whom Nostradamus had brought to her at the château of Chaumont.

Some days before the shocking closing scenes of this reign, François II. had expressed a wish to take a trip on the Loire, in order not to be in the city when the Prince de Condé was executed. After he had abandoned the prince's head to the Cardinal de Lorraine, he lived in equal dread of an uprising and of the supplications of the Princesse de Condé. As he was about to embark, one of the cool winds which blow along the Loire in the early winter caused him such a severe pain in the ear that he was obliged to return to the palace; he took to his bed, never to leave it again alive. Despite the contradiction of the physicians, who, with the exception of Chapelain, were his enemies and antagonists, Paré maintained that an abscess had formed in the king's head, and

that unless the foreign substance were discharged, the chances of saving his life decreased from day to day.

Notwithstanding the late hour and the curfew law, which was strictly enforced in Orléans, the city being practically in a state of siege, Paré's lamp shone in his window, and he was studying; Lecamus hailed him from the street, and when he had called out his name, the physician ordered that his old friend should be admitted.

"You take no rest, Ambroise, and, while you restore life to others, you waste your own," said the furrier, as he entered the room.

The surgeon was sitting, with his books lying open on the table and his instruments scattered about, before a skull, recently buried and taken from the cemetery, in which he had made an incision.

"It's a question of saving the king's life."

"Are you very certain of your ability to do it?" cried the old man, with a shudder.

"As certain as of my existence. The king, my old friend, has a pernicious abscess pressing on the brain, which will eventually break and fill it, and the crisis is at hand; but, by boring into the skull, I expect to expel the pus and relieve the brain. I have thrice before performed this operation, which was invented by a Piedmontese, and which I have had the good fortune to perfect. The first was on Monsieur de Pienne at the siege of Metz; I cured him, and he has been a wiser man since: he had an

abscess caused by an arquebus shot in the head. The second saved the life of a pauper, upon whom I wished to demonstrate the beneficence of the audacious operation to which Monsieur de Pienne had submitted. The third operation was upon a gentleman in Paris who is perfectly well to-day. Trepanning—that is the name of the operation—is but little known as yet. Patients are reluctant to undergo it because of the imperfection of the instrument, which I have succeeded at last in improving. I am experimenting on this head, in order not to fail on the king's to-morrow."

"You should be sure of your ground, for your own head would be in danger in case—"

"I would wager my life that he will be cured," replied Ambroise, with the serene confidence of the man of genius. "Ah! my old friend, what does boring a hole in the head amount to, with due precaution? isn't it what soldiers do every day in battle, with no precautions whatever?"

"My son," said the outspoken bourgeois, "do you know that to save the king is to ruin France? Do you know that that instrument will help to place the crown of the Valois on the head of the Lorraine who claims to be the heir of Charlemagne? Do you know that surgery and politics are entangled at this moment? Yes, the triumph of your genius means the downfall of your religion. If the Guises retain the regency, the blood of the reformers will flow in streams! Be a great citizen rather than a great surgeon, and sleep late to-morrow, leaving the

sick-room to the physicians who, if they fail to cure the king, will cure France!"

"I!" cried Paré, "I let a man die when I can save him! No! no! though I were to be hanged myself as an accomplice of Calvin, I will go to the king early. Do you not know that the only favor I propose to ask, after I have saved the king, is your Christophe's life? There certainly will be a moment when Queen Mary will refuse me nothing."

"Alas! my friend," said Lecamus, "has not the little king refused to pardon the Prince de Condé at the solicitation of the princess? Do not crush your religion by prolonging the life of the man who is doomed to die."

"Do you propose to take a hand in trying to find out how God proposes to order future events?" cried Paré. "Honest men have but one motto: 'Do your duty, come what come may!'—I did my duty at the siege of Calais, when I put my foot on the grand master's face: I ran the risk of being strangled by all his friends, by his retainers, and to-day I am first surgeon to the king; nay, more, I am of the Reformed religion, and Messieurs de Guise are my friends. I will save the king!" cried the surgeon, with the solemn enthusiasm of conviction which genius imparts, "and God will save France!"

There was a knock at the door, and a few moments later one of Ambroise's servants handed a paper to Lecamus, who read aloud these alarming words:

"A scaffold is being erected at the Convent des Récollets, on which the Prince de Condé is to be beheaded to-morrow."

Ambroise and Lecamus gazed at each other, overwhelmed by the same feeling of profound horror.

"I will go to make sure of it," said the furrier.

On the square, Ruggieri took Lecamus's arm and asked him the secret of Ambroise's plan for saving the king, but the old man feared some ruse and insisted upon going to see the scaffold. So the furrier and the astrologer went together to the Récollets, where they found carpenters working by torchlight.

"I say, friend, what are you at work upon?" Lecamus asked one of them.

"We are preparing to hang heretics, as the bleeding at Amboise did not cure them," said a young Récollet who was overlooking the workmen.

"Monsieur le cardinal is quite right," said the prudent Ruggieri; "but in our country we have a better way."

"What do you do?" said the Récollet.

"We burn them, brother."

Lecamus was obliged to lean upon the astrologer; his legs refused to carry him, for he thought that his son might be hanging from one of those gibbets on the morrow. The poor old man was between two sciences, astrology and surgery, both of which promised him the safety of his son, for whom the scaffold was evidently being erected. In the confusion of his ideas he allowed himself to be kneaded like dough by the Florentine.

"Well, my worthy dealer in miniver, what do you say to these Lorraine pleasantries?" said Ruggieri.

"Alas! you know that I would give my own skin to see my son's safe and whole!"

"There spoke the dealer in ermine," rejoined the Italian; "but explain to me carefully the operation Ambroise proposes to perform on the king, and I will answer for your son's life."

"Really?" cried the old furrier.

"What oath shall I take?" queried Ruggieri.

At that proof of good faith, the poor old man repeated his interview with Ambroise to the Florentine, who left the heart-broken father in the street as soon as the great surgeon's secret was divulged.

"Which devil is that knave aiming at?" cried the old man, as he saw Ruggieri hurrying away toward Place de l'Estape.

Lecamus knew nothing of the terrible scene which was taking place around the royal bed, and which had caused the order to erect the scaffold for the prince, whose sentence had been pronounced by default, so to speak, and whose execution had been postponed because of the king's illness.

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In the great hall, on the stairway, and in the courtyard of the *bailliage*, no one was to be seen save persons actually on duty. The great multitude of the courtiers crowded the apartments of the King of Navarre, to whom, according to the laws of the realm, the regency would belong. The French nobility, alarmed by the insolence of the Guises, felt the advisability of rallying around the head of the younger branch, seeing the queen-mother subordinated to the Guises, and having no comprehension of her Italian policy. Antoine de Bourbon, true to his secret agreement with Catherine, was not to yield his claim to the regency in her favor until the States had pronounced their judgment upon that question. This profound solitude made a deep impression on the grand master, when, on returning from making the round of the city posts as a measure of prudence, he found in attendance upon the king none but the friends who were attached to his own fortunes.

The room in which François II.'s bed was placed adjoined the principal hall of the *bailliage*. It was at that time wainscoted with oak. The ceiling, composed of long, narrow boards, cunningly matched and painted, was decorated with blue arabesques on a gold background, a part of which, when it was torn down nearly fifty years ago, was acquired by a

collector of antiquities. This room, which was hung with tapestries and had a carpet on the floor, was naturally so dark that the torches hardly lighted it. The huge bed, with four columns and silk curtains, resembled a tomb. On one side of the bed, by the pillow, were Queen Mary and the Cardinal de Lorraine. Catherine was seated in an easy-chair. The famous Jean Chapelain, the physician on duty, who was afterward first physician to Charles IX., was standing by the fireplace. The most profound silence reigned. The young king, thin and pale, was almost lost among the bedclothes, his pinched little face hardly visible on the pillow. The Duchesse de Guise sat on a stool, assisting the young Queen Mary, and Madame de Fiesco, in the window-recess, watched closely every look and movement of the queen-mother, for she realized the dangers of her position.

In the hall, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, Monsieur de Cypierre, tutor to the Duc d'Orléans, and lately appointed governor of the city, occupied one corner of the fireplace with the two Gondis. The Cardinal de Tournon, who espoused the queen-mother's cause at this crisis, because he was treated as an inferior by the Cardinal de Lorraine, whose ecclesiastical equal he certainly was, was talking in undertones with the Gondis. Maréchal de Vieilleville and Maréchal de Saint-André were discussing the dangers to which the Guises were exposed with the keeper of the seals, who presided over the States.

The lieutenant-general of the kingdom crossed the hall, casting a swift glance around, and saluted the Duc d'Orléans, whom he espied there.

"Monseigneur," he said, "this may serve to teach you to understand mankind: the Catholic nobility of the kingdom are in attendance upon a heretic prince, because they believe that the States will grant the regency to the heirs of the traitor who caused your illustrious grandfather to be kept so long in prison."

Having said these words, which were well adapted to make a deep impression in the heart of a prince, he passed into the bed-chamber, where the young king was in a sort of heavy torpor rather than asleep. Ordinarily, the Duc de Guise was able to disguise the sinister appearance of his scarred face by an expression of great affability, but, at that moment, he had not the heart to smile, seeing that the instrument of his power was falling in pieces. The cardinal, whose civil courage was as great as his brother's military courage, stepped forward to meet the lieutenant-general.

"Robertet thinks that little Pinard is sold to the queen-mother," he said in his ear, leading him back into the hall; "they have used him to work upon the members of the States."

"Bah! what matters it that we are betrayed by a secretary when everybody betrays us!" cried the lieutenant-general. "The city is for the Reformation, and we are on the eve of an uprising. Yes! the *wasps* are discontented," he added, using the

nickname commonly applied to the people of Orléans, "and if Paré does not save the king, we shall have a terrible clashing of shields. Before long we shall have to lay siege to Orléans, which is a hotbed of Huguenots."

"For the last few minutes," rejoined the cardinal, "I have been watching that Italian who sits there utterly unmoved, watching for her son's death, God forgive her! I am wondering if we should not do well to arrest her as well as the King of Navarre."

"It is too much to have the Prince de Condé in prison!" replied the duke.

The clatter of a horseman riding at full speed rang out at the gate of the *bailliage*. The two Lorraine princes went to the window, and by the light of the concierge's and sentinel's torches which were always burning under the porch they recognized on the horseman's hat the famous Lorraine cross which the cardinal had caused his adherents to adopt. He sent one of the arquebusiers who were in the antechamber, to bid the guards admit the new-comer, while he and his brother went out to the landing to meet him.

"What is it, my dear Simeuse?" the duke, upon recognizing the governor of Gien, asked with the charm of manner which he was accustomed to display for men of the sword.

"The constable is entering Pithiviers; he left Ecouen with fifteen hundred horse and a hundred gentlemen—"

"Have they an escort?" said the duke.

"Yes, monseigneur, there are twenty-six hundred of them in all. Some say that Thoré is behind with a body of infantry. If the constable amuses himself by waiting for his son, you have time to defeat him."

"Do you know nothing more? Are the reasons for this appeal to arms divulged?"

"Anne talks as little as he writes; go out to meet him, brother, while I prepare to greet him with his nephew's head," said the cardinal, sending a servant to bid Robertet to come to him.

"Vieilleville!" cried the duke to the marshal, who came at his call, "the constable has the presumption to appear at Orléans under arms; if I go out to meet him, will you undertake to hold the city?"

"As soon as you go forth, the citizens will take up arms. And who can answer for the result of a battle between horsemen and bourgeois in these narrow streets?" replied the marshal.

"Monseigneur," said Robertet, rushing hurriedly up the stairs, "the chancellor is at the gate and wishes to enter; shall we admit him?"

"Admit him," replied the Cardinal de Lorraine. "Constable and chancellor together would be too dangerous; we must separate them. We were handsomely tricked by the queen-mother in the choice of L'Hôpital for that office."

Robertet motioned with his head to a captain who was awaiting orders at the foot of the stairs, then turned back hastily to listen to the cardinal's instructions.

"I take the liberty, monseigneur," he said, making one more effort, "to suggest that the sentence must be *approved by the king in his council.* If you violate the law for a prince of the blood, it will not be respected hereafter, for a cardinal, nor for a Duc de Guise."

"Pinard has turned your head, Robertet," said the cardinal sternly. "Do you not know that the king signed the decree on the day that he started to leave the city in order to leave its execution to us?"

"Although you practically ask me to sacrifice my head by assigning me to this duty, which can be executed by the provost of the city, I will go, monseigneur."

The grand master listened to this discussion without moving a muscle; but he took his brother by the arm and led him to a corner of the hall.

"Unquestionably," he said, "the heirs of Charlemagne have the right to resume a crown which was usurped from their ancestors by Hugues Capet; but can they do it? The pear is not ripe. Our nephew is dying, and the whole court is dancing attendance on the King of Navarre."

"The king's heart failed him. But for that, the Béarnais would have been stabbed, and we should have had no difficulty with the other children."

"We are in a bad plight here," said the duke. "The outbreak in the city would be supported by the States. L'Hôpital, whom we pressed for the chancellorship and whom the queen-mother opposed, is against us to-day, and we need the aid of the law.

The queen-mother is supported by too many people to-day for us to send her away. Besides, there are three other princes!"

"She is no longer a mother, she is all queen," said the cardinal; "and for that reason, in my judgment, this is the moment to have done with her. Energy, and energy, and more energy! that's my motto."

Thereupon the cardinal returned to the king's apartment, followed by the grand master. The priest went straight to Catherine.

"The papers taken from La Sagne, the Prince de Condé's secretary, have been communicated to you, have they not, and you know that the Bourbons propose to dethrone your children?" he said.

"I know all that," replied the Italian.

"Very well, do you intend to arrest the King of Navarre?"

"There is a lieutenant-general of the kingdom," she said.

At that moment, François II. complained of severe pains in his ear and began to groan piteously. The doctor left the fireplace, where he was warming himself, and went to examine his head.

"Well, monsieur?" inquired the grand master, addressing the first physician.

"I do not dare take it upon myself to apply a cataplasm to draw out the matter," said Chapelain. "Master Ambroise has promised to save the king by an operation, and I should interfere with it."

"Let us postpone it till to-morrow," said Catherine coldly, "and let all the physicians be present;

for you know to what calumnies a prince's death gives birth."

She went and kissed her son's hands, and withdrew.

"How calmly that impudent tradesman's daughter alludes to the death of the dauphin, who was poisoned by Montecuculli, a Florentine of her own suite!" cried Mary Stuart.

"Mary!" cried the little king, "my grandfather never had the slightest doubt of her innocence."

"Can we prevent that woman from coming here to-morrow?" the young queen asked her uncles, in an undertone.

"What would become of us if the king should die?" replied the cardinal; "Catherine would push us all into his tomb."

Thus the issue was clearly drawn that night between Catherine de' Medici and the House of Lorraine. The chancellor's arrival and the constable's indicated a revolt; therefore the next morning would be decisive.

The next morning, the queen-mother was the first to appear. She found in her son's chamber only Queen Mary Stuart, pale and exhausted, who had passed the night praying by the bedside. The Duchesse de Guise had attended the queen through the night, and the maids of honor had relieved one another. The young king was asleep. Neither the duke nor the cardinal had appeared as yet. The priest, more courageous than the soldier, exerted, it was said, during that last night, all his powers of

persuasion, but could not induce the duke to seize upon the crown. In face of the assembled States-General, and threatened with a conflict with the Connétable de Montmorency, Le Balafré did not consider the circumstances favorable for the attempt; he refused to arrest the King of Navarre, the queen-mother, the chancellor, the Cardinal de Tournon, the Gondis, Ruggieri, and Birague, dwelling upon the outbreak which would follow such violent measures. He insisted that his brother's projects must depend upon the life or death of François II.

The most profound silence reigned in the king's chamber. Catherine, attended by Madame de Fiesco, walked to the bedside and gazed upon her son with an admirably well-feigned grief-stricken air. She put her handkerchief to her eyes and withdrew to the window-recess, where Madame de Fiesco brought her a chair. There, she fixed her eyes upon the courtyard.

It had been agreed between Catherine and the Cardinal de Tournon that, if the constable succeeded in entering the city without opposition, the cardinal would come to the palace with the two Gondis, and that, if anything had gone wrong, he would come alone. At nine in the morning, the two Lorraine princes, attended by their suites, who remained in the hall, appeared in the king's room; the captain of the guard on duty had notified them of the arrival of Ambroise Paré with Chapelain and three other physicians in Catherine's interest, all of whom hated Ambroise.

In a few moments the great hall of the *bailliage* presented precisely the same appearance as the *salle des gardes* at Blois on the day when the Duc de Guise was made lieutenant-general of the kingdom and Christophe was put to the torture, with the exception that at that time the royal apartment overflowed with love and joy, the Guises were triumphant: whereas to-day sorrow and death reigned, and the Guises felt that their power was slipping from their hands. The maids of honor of the two queens were encamped at each corner of the great fireplace, where an enormous fire was blazing. The hall was full of courtiers. The report that had been put in circulation, no one knew by whom, that Ambroise had conceived a daring plan for saving the king's life, brought together all the nobles who were entitled to appear at court. The outer staircase of the *bailliage* and the courtyard were filled with anxious groups. The scaffold prepared for the prince in front of the Convent des Récollets surprised all the nobility. They conversed in undertones, and their conversation presented the same mixture of serious, frivolous, trivial, and solemn remarks as at Blois. People were beginning to become accustomed to the civil commotions, the sudden revolutions, appeals to arms, rebellions, and unexpected momentous events which marked the long period during which the House of Valois gradually died out, despite the efforts of Catherine de' Medici. Absolute silence prevailed within a certain distance of the door of the king's chamber, which was guarded by two

halberdiers, two pages, and the captain of the Scottish Guard. Antoine de Bourbon, a prisoner in his lodgings, divined the hopes of the court when he found that he was left alone once more, and he was overwhelmed by the news of the preparations made during the night for his brother's execution.

In front of the fireplace in the hall of the *bailliage*, stood one of the noblest and grandest figures of that time, the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, in his red robe with ermine border, and with his cap on his head in accordance with the privilege of his office. That courageous man, seeing that his benefactors were rebels at heart, had espoused the cause of his sovereigns, represented by the queen-mother; and he had gone to Ecouen to take counsel with the constable, at the risk of losing his head; no one dared to interrupt the meditation in which he was plunged. Robertet, the secretary of State, two marshals of France, Vieilleville and Saint-André, and the keeper of the seals, formed a group in front of the chancellor. The courtiers were not actually laughing; but their remarks were malicious, especially among those who were not partisans of the Guises.

The cardinal had at last captured the Scotchman Stuart, the assassin of President Minard, and had caused his trial to be begun at Tours. He also held in custody, in the châteaux of Blois and of Tours, a goodly number of compromised noblemen, for the purpose of inspiring terror in the nobility, who were not terrified, however, and who found in the Reformation a spur to the love of revolution inspired by

the consciousness of their former equality with the king. Now, the prisoners at Blois had found a means of escape, and, by a strange fatality, the prisoners at Tours imitated those at Blois.

"Madame," said the Cardinal de Châtillon to Madame de Fiesco, "if anyone is interested in the prisoners at Tours, they are in great danger."

At those words, the chancellor turned his face toward the queen-mother's maids of honor.

"Yes, young Desvaux, the Prince de Condé's equerry, who was detained at Tours, emphasized his flight by a bitter jest. He wrote this note to Messieurs de Guise, they say:

"'We have learned of the escape of your prisoners at Blois; we are so annoyed that we have started off after them; we will bring them back to you as soon as we have caught them.'"

Although the jest was not displeasing to the chancellor, he bestowed a stern glance on Monsieur de Châtillon. At that moment, loud voices were heard in the king's room. The two marshals, Robertet, and the chancellor drew near the door, for it was not simply a matter of the king's life or death; the whole court was in the secret of the perilous position of the chancellor, Catherine, and her adherents. The silence that ensued was deathlike. Ambroise had examined the king, the moment seemed favorable for his operation; if it were not performed, François II. might die at any moment. As soon as Messieurs de Guise appeared, he had explained to them

the causes of the king's illness, and that, in the present extremity, it was necessary to trepan him; and he was awaiting the word from the physicians.

"Cut into my son's head as if it were a board, and with that horrible instrument!" cried Catherine de' Medici; "I will not allow it, Master Ambroise."

The physicians were consulting; but Catherine's words were uttered in such a loud voice that they were heard on the other side of the door, as she had intended.

"But, madame, if there is no other way to save him," said Mary Stuart, weeping.

"Ambroise," exclaimed Catherine, "remember that you will answer for the king's life with your own."

"We oppose the method that Master Ambroise suggests," said the three physicians. "We can save the king by injecting in his ear a preparation which will draw out the matter through the passage of the ear."

The grand master, who was watching Catherine's face, suddenly went to her and drew her into the window-recess.

"Madame," he said, "you desire the death of your son; you are acting in concert with our enemies, and have been since Blois. This morning, Counsellor de Viole told your furrier's son that the Prince de Condé's head was to be cut off. That young man, who during his torture denied all relations with the Prince de Condé, made a sign of farewell to him as he passed the window of his dungeon. You watched your unhappy accomplice under the

torture with royal insensibility. You choose to-day to oppose the recovery of your oldest son. You will make us believe that the dauphin's death, which placed the crown on the late king's head, was not natural, and that Montecuculli was your—"

"Monsieur le Chancelier!" cried Catherine, while Madame de Fiesco, at a signal from her, threw the folding-doors wide open.

Thereupon the spectacle within the royal chamber was revealed to the audience: the little king with his livid, deathlike face and sightless eyes, but stammering the word *Mary*, and holding the weeping young queen's hand; the Duchesse de Guise, standing by the bed, dismayed by Catherine's hardihood; the two Lorraine princes, equally disturbed in mind, but standing beside the queen-mother, having determined to order Maillé-Brézé to arrest her; and, finally, the tall form of Ambroise Paré, assisted by the king's physician, and with his instruments ready in his hand, but afraid to begin the operation, for which absolute quiet was as essential as the approbation of the physicians.

"Monsieur le Chancelier," said Catherine, "Messieurs de Guise propose to authorize a novel operation upon the king's person. Ambroise offers to bore a hole in his head. I, as his mother, as one of the Council of Regency, protest against what seems to me the crime of lèse-majesté. The three physicians favor an injection, which seems to me quite as likely to be efficacious and less dangerous than the barbarous treatment proposed by Ambroise."

A sorrowful murmur followed her words. The cardinal allowed the chancellor to enter, and closed the door.

"But I am lieutenant-general of the kingdom," said the Duc de Guise, "and you must know, Monsieur le Chancelier, that Ambroise will answer for his success with his life."

"Ah! if affairs are to take this course," exclaimed the great Ambroise Paré, "why, this is my duty."

He extended his arm over the bed.

"This bed and the king are mine," he continued. "I make myself solely responsible and claim sole control; I know the duties of my office, and I will operate upon the king without the consent of the physicians."

"Save him," said the cardinal, "and you shall be the richest man in France."

"Go on, pray," said Mary Stuart, pressing Ambroise's hand.

"I cannot prevent this thing," said the chancellor, "but I protest on behalf of Madame la reine mère."

"Robertet!" cried the Duc de Guise.

When Robertet had entered the room, the lieutenant-general pointed to the chancellor.

"You are chancellor of France in that felon's stead," he said to him. "Monsieur de Maillé, conduct Monsieur de l'Hôpital to the Prince de Condé's place of confinement.—As for you, madame," he said to Catherine, "your protest will not be received, and you would do well to reflect that such

acts need to be supported by sufficient force. I am acting as becomes a faithful subject and loyal servant of King François II., my master.—Proceed, Ambroise," he added, turning to the surgeon.

"Monsieur de Guise," said L'Hôpital, "if you use violence either upon the king or the chancellor of France, reflect that there are in yonder hall a sufficient number of French noblemen to arrest traitors."

"Ah! messeigneurs," cried the great surgeon, "if you continue these discussions, you may as well cry: 'Vive King Charles IX.!' for King François is dying."

Catherine, unaffected, was looking through the window.

"Very well, we will use force to make ourselves masters of the king's chamber," said the cardinal, who started to close the door.

But he was dismayed to see that the hall of the *bailliage* was utterly deserted. The court, convinced that the king's death was inevitable, had hurried off to Antoine de Navarre.

"Well, go on," cried Mary Stuart to Ambroise. "I—and you, duchess," she said to Madame de Guise—"will protect you."

"Madame," said Ambroise, "my zeal carried me away; the physicians, save my friend Chapelain, are in favor of an injection, and I am bound to obey them. He would have been saved, had I been first physician as well as first surgeon!—Give it to me," he said, taking a little syringe from the hands of the first physician and filling it.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Mary Stuart, "I order you—"

"Alas! madame," said Ambroise, "I am subordinate to these gentlemen."

The young queen took her place with the grand master's wife among the surgeon and the physicians and the other persons present. The first physician held the king's head, and Ambroise injected the preparation into his ear. The two Lorraine princes watched the proceeding closely. Robertet and Monsieur de Maillé did not stir. Madame de Fiesco left the room unnoticed, at a sign from Catherine. At that moment, L'Hôpital boldly opened the door of the king's chamber.

"I come in good time," said a man, whose hurried footsteps echoed through the hall, and who appeared an instant later in the doorway of the royal apartment. "Ah! messieurs, so you proposed to cut off the head of my handsome nephew, the Prince de Condé, eh?—but you have brought the lion forth from his den, and he is here!" added the Connétable de Montmorency.—"Ambroise, you shall not fumble about with your instruments in my king's head! The kings of France do not allow themselves to be mangled save by their enemies' swords, in battle! The first prince of the blood, Antoine de Bourbon, the Prince de Condé, the queen-mother, the constable, and the chancellor are opposed to this operation."

To Catherine's great satisfaction, the King of Navarre and Prince de Condé appeared at that moment.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the Duc de Guise, putting his hand to his sword.

"In my capacity as constable, I have dismissed the sentinels at all the posts. *Tête-Dieu!* you are not in an enemy's country here, I conceive. The king our master is in the midst of his subjects, and the States of the realm are entitled to deliberate without constraint. I come from the States, messieurs! I carried thither the remonstrance of my nephew of Condé, whom three hundred gentlemen released from his prison. You proposed to shed royal blood and decimate the nobility of the kingdom. Ah! henceforth I shall be distrustful of all your plans, Messieurs de Lorraine. If you order the king's head to be opened, I swear by this sword, which saved France from Charles V. under his grandsire, that it shall not be."

"Especially," said Ambroise Paré, "as it would be useless now; effusion has begun."

"Your reign is at an end, messieurs," said Catherine to the Lorraines, seeing from Ambroise's expression that there was no more hope.

"Ah! madame, you have killed your son," said Mary Stuart, springing like a lioness from the bed to the window and seizing the Florentine by the arm, which she gripped savagely.

"My dear," Catherine retorted, with a cunning, cold glance at Mary, in which she allowed her hatred, held in check for six months, to find expression, "you, to his frantic love of whom we owe his death, may go now and reign in your

Scotland, and you shall start to-morrow. I am *de facto* regent."

The three physicians had made a sign to the queen-mother.

"Messieurs," she said, turning to the Guises, "it is understood between Monsieur de Bourbon, appointed lieutenant-general of the kingdom by the States, and myself, that we will henceforth attend to affairs of State.—Come, Monsieur le Chancelier."

"The king is dead," said the grand master, bound to perform the duties of his office.

"Vive King Charles IX.!" cried the gentlemen who had come with the King of Navarre, the Prince de Condé, and the constable.

The ceremonies which take place at the death of a king of France were performed in solitude. When the king-at-arms cried thrice in the hall: "The king is dead!" after the official proclamation by the Duc de Guise, there were but few persons to respond: "*Vive le roi!*"

The queen-mother, to whom Madame de Fiesco brought the Duc de Orléans, for the last few moments King Charles IX., went out leading her son by the hand, and was followed by the whole court. There remained in the chamber where François II. breathed his last, only the two Lorraines, the Duchesse de Guise, Mary Stuart, and Dayelle, with the two guards at the door, the pages in attendance on the grand master and the cardinal, and their private secretaries.

"Vive la France!" cried several partisans of the

Reformed religion, sounding the first note of opposition.

Robertet, who owed everything to the duke and the cardinal, alarmed by the failure of their plans and enterprises, secretly gave in his adhesion to the queen-mother; and the ambassadors of Spain, England, Poland, and the Empire came to the hall to meet her, led by the Cardinal de Tournon, who had gone to notify them of the state of affairs, after showing himself in the courtyard to Catherine just as she protested against Ambroise Paré's proposed operation.

"Well! the descendants of Louis d'Outre-Mer, the heirs of Charles de Lorraine have lacked courage," said the cardinal to the duke.

"They would have been exiled to Lorraine," replied the grand master. "I tell you, Charles, that, if the crown were there, I would not put out my hand to take it. I will leave that for my son to do."

"Will he ever have, as you have, the army and the Church?"

"He will have something better."

"What?"

"The people!"

"There is no one but me to weep for this poor boy who loved me so dearly!" said Mary Stuart, holding her dead husband's cold hand in hers.

"Through whom can we become reconciled to the queen?" said the cardinal.

"Wait until she quarrels with the Huguenots," replied the duchess.

The conflicting interests of the House of Bourbon, of Catherine, of the Guises, and of the party of the Reformation produced such confusion in Orléans that not until three days later was the king's body, which had lain neglected in the *bailliage*, placed in a coffin by humble retainers and despatched to Saint-Denis in a covered carriage, attended only by the Bishop of Senlis and two gentlemen. When that melancholy funeral party reached the little town of Etampes, a retainer of Chancelier de l'Hôpital fastened upon the carriage this bitterly ironical inscription which history has handed down: "Tanneguy du Chastel, where art thou? But thou wert a Frenchman!"—A stinging rebuke of Catherine, Mary Stuart, and the Lorraines. What Frenchman does not know that Tanneguy de Chastel expended thirty thousand crowns—equal to a million of francs to-day—upon the obsequies of Charles VII., the benefactor of his family?

As soon as the tolling of the bells announced the death of François II. in Orléans, and the Connétable de Montmorency had caused all the gates of the city to be thrown open, Tourillon went up to his garret and walked to a hiding-place in the wall.

"Can it be that he is dead?" he exclaimed.

Thereupon a man appeared, and replied: "*Ready to serve!*" the watchword of those reformers who followed Calvin.

That man was Chaudieu, to whom Tourillon narrated the events of the past week, during which he had left the minister alone in his hiding-place with no food save a twelve-pound loaf.

"Hasten to the Prince de Condé, brother; ask him for a safe-conduct for me, and find me a horse," cried the minister; "I must be off instantly."

"Write him a line, so that he will receive me."

"Here," said Chaudieu, after writing a few words, "ask the King of Navarre for a pass, for at the present crisis I must hasten to Geneva."

In two hours everything was ready, and the zealous minister was on his way to Switzerland, accompanied by a gentleman in the service of the King of Navarre, whose secretary Chaudieu was supposed to be, and who was the bearer of instructions to the reformers in Dauphiné. Chaudieu's departure was assented to instantly in the interest of Catherine, who made, to gain time, a bold proposition as to which the most profound secrecy was maintained. That strange conception explains the sudden agreement between her and the Huguenot leaders. The crafty creature had given out as a pledge of her good faith an earnest desire to adjust the differences between the two churches in an assemblage which could be called neither synod nor council nor conference, but for which a new name must be found, and, most important of all, Calvin's approval secured. When this mystery became known, let us say, in passing, it led to the alliance between the Guises and the Connétable de Montmorency against Catherine and the King of Navarre, a curious alliance, known in history by the name of the *triumvirate*, because the Maréchal de Saint-André was a third member of that purely Catholic coalition, induced by the strange

proposition of a colloquy between Calvinists and Catholics. Catherine's deep policy was accurately divined by the Guises at that time; they understood that the queen really cared but little about the proposed colloquy, but simply desired to temporize with her allies until the majority of Charles IX.; so they deceived the constable by making him believe in a combination of forces between the Bourbons and Catherine, while Catherine fooled them all. As we see, the queen had become exceedingly clever in a short time. The spirit of argument and disputation which then prevailed was singularly favorable to her suggestion. Catholics and reformers all hoped to make their mark in that tournament of words. And that is precisely what happened. Is it not extraordinary that historians have taken the queen's most adroit stratagems for exhibitions of uncertainty? Catherine never went more directly toward her goal than in these shrewd measures which seemed to lead away from it.

The King of Navarre, incapable of understanding Catherine's reasoning, despatched Chaudieu to Calvin; he had risked his life to watch the course of events at Orléans, where he was likely to be discovered from hour to hour and hanged without trial, like every man over whom a decree of banishment is hanging. At the rate of travelling, at that time, Chaudieu was not likely to reach Geneva before February, the negotiations could not be concluded until March, and the colloquy could not really be held before the beginning of May, 1561. Catherine

had formed the plan of keeping the court and the various parties amused by the king's coronation and by his first bed of justice at the Parliament of Paris, where De Thou and L'Hôpital procured the confirmation of the letters whereby Charles IX. entrusted the government of the realm to his mother jointly with the lieutenant-general of the kingdom, Antoine de Navarre, the weakest prince of that age!

It was a most extraordinary spectacle to see a whole kingdom waiting in suspense for the *yes* or *no* of a French bourgeois, who, after a long life of obscurity, was at this time established in authority at Geneva! The Transalpine Pope held in check by the Pope at Geneva! the two Lorraine princes, but now so powerful, paralyzed by this momentary combination of the first prince of the blood, the queen-mother, and Calvin! Surely it is one of the most useful lessons that kings can learn from history, a lesson which teaches them to weigh the qualities of men, to do homage to genius, and to seek it out, as Louis XIV. did, wherever God has placed it!

*

Calvin, whose name was not Calvin, but Cauvin, was the son of a cooper of Noyon in Picardie. His native province explains, to a certain extent, the obstinacy blended with abnormal activity which was the distinguishing characteristic of that arbiter of the destinies of France in the sixteenth century. No character in history is less familiar than the man who gave birth to Geneva and the spirit that distinguished that city. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who possessed little historical knowledge, was entirely ignorant of that man's influence upon his republic. And, indeed, Calvin, who lived in one of the least pretentious houses of upper Geneva, near the temple of Saint Peter, over a cabinet-maker,—the first point of resemblance between him and Robespierre,—at first wielded no very great authority in the city. For a long time, his power was maliciously confined by the Genevans within narrow limits. In the sixteenth century, Geneva had in Farel one of those illustrious citizens who remain unknown to the world at large, and often to the very place of their abode. This Farel, about 1537, detained Calvin in that city, commending it to him as the most secure fortress of a reformation more militant than Luther's. Both Farel and Calvin looked upon Lutheranism as an incomplete, insufficient work, which had acquired no hold in France. Geneva, located between France

and Italy, and with the French language in general use, was admirably situated for correspondence with Germany, Italy, and France. Calvin adopted Geneva as the seat of his moral fortunes and made it the citadel of his ideas.

The Council of Geneva, at Farel's instance, authorized Calvin to give lessons in theology, in September, 1538. Calvin left the preaching to Farel, his first disciple, and patiently devoted his energies to the inculcation of his doctrines. His authority, which became absolute in the later years of his life, was destined to be established with great difficulty. The great agitator encountered such serious obstacles, that he was banished from Geneva for a considerable time because of the severity of his methods of reform. There was a party of worthy people who held out for the old-fashioned luxurious living and for the old customs. But, as always, these worthy folk dreaded ridicule, were unwilling to admit the object of their efforts, and made their fight upon points unconnected with the real question at issue. Calvin insisted that they should use *leavened bread* for the communion, and that there should be no more holidays, except Sundays. These innovations were disapproved at Berne and Lausanne, and the Genevans were instructed to conform to the Swiss ritual. Calvin and Farel resisted, and their political enemies availed themselves of this disagreement to drive them from Geneva, from which city they were practically exiled for several years. Calvin afterward returned in triumph at the demand of his flock.

Such persecution always ends by solidifying the moral power, when the victim has the patience to wait. His return was the beginning of his career as prophet. The executions were beginning, and Calvin organized his religious terror. Immediately upon the return of that transcendent mind, he was admitted to the Genevan bourgeoisie; but, after a residence of fourteen years, he had not become a member of the council. At the time that Catherine despatched an envoy to him, that king of ideas had no other title than that of pastor of the church at Geneva. Calvin never received more than a hundred and fifty francs in money, fifteen measures of wheat, and two casks of wine, for his yearly salary. His brother, a simple tailor, had a shop a few yards from Place Saint-Pierre, on the street where one of the largest printing-houses in Geneva now stands. This disinterestedness, which is lacking in the lives of Newton, Voltaire, and Bacon, but shines resplendent in those of Rabelais, Campanella, Luther, Vico, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Loyola, Kant, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, surely forms a glorious setting for those sublime and ardent faces!

The similar existence of Robespierre alone can enable contemporaries to understand the career of Calvin, who, resting his power on the same foundations, was as cruel, as despotic, as the lawyer from Arras! Strangely enough, Picardie—Arras and Noyon—supplied both of those instruments of reformation! All those who choose to examine the reasons for the punishments ordained by Calvin

will find, after making due allowance for differences of time and place, 1793 *in toto* at Geneva. Calvin caused Jacques Gruet to be beheaded "for having written impious letters and licentious poetry, and for having endeavored to overthrow the ecclesiastical ordinances."—Reflect upon that sentence, ask yourself whether the most shocking tyrannies offer for their saturnalia of crime more cruelly absurd judgments. Valentin Gentilis, condemned to death for *involuntary heresy*, escaped the gallows only by a retractation more ignominious than those exacted by the Catholic Church. Seven years prior to the conference about to be held at Calvin's house concerning the queen-mother's propositions, Michel Servet, *a Frenchman*, passing through Geneva, was arrested, tried, convicted upon Calvin's accusation, and burned alive, *for having assailed the mystery of the Trinity* in a book which was neither written nor published at Geneva. Remember the eloquent defence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose book, which aimed to overthrow the Catholic religion, was written in France, published in Holland, but offered for sale in Paris, was simply burned by the hangman, and the author, *a foreigner*, simply banished from the kingdom where he had tried to undermine the fundamental verities of religion and lawful authority—and compare the conduct of Parliament with that of the Genevan tyrant. Lastly, Bolsée also was brought to judgment *for having had other ideas than Calvin's concerning predestination!*—Weigh these facts, and ask yourself if Fouquier-Tinville did

worse. The savage religious intolerance of Calvin was, morally speaking, more intense, more implacable, than the savage political intolerance of Robespierre. On a more extensive stage than Geneva, Calvin would have shed more blood than was shed by the redoubtable apostle of political equality assimilated to Catholic equality. Three centuries earlier, a monk, also a Picard, had led the whole West in a descent upon the East. Peter the Hermit, Calvin, and Robespierre, those three Picards, three centuries apart, were, politically speaking, the levers of Archimedes. At each period, an idea found a support in selfish interests and among men.

Calvin, then, was unquestionably the father of that melancholy city called Geneva, where, ten years ago, a man said, pointing to a porte-cochère in the upper town, the first ever seen in Geneva—there had previously been none but ordinary front doors: "Through that door luxury entered Geneva!" Calvin, by the rigor of his executions and the harshness of his doctrine, introduced there the hypocritical practice called *mummery*. To have good morals, according to the *mummers*, consists in turning one's back on the arts and refinements of life, in eating copiously, but without luxury, and in silently heaping up money without enjoying it otherwise than as Calvin enjoyed his power, in thought. Calvin gave to all his fellow-citizens the same dismal livery in which he clothed his whole life. In the consistory, he had created a genuine Calvinist tribunal of inquisition, absolutely like Robespierre's revolutionary

tribunal. The consistory turned over to the council the persons to be sentenced, and Calvin reigned in the council through the consistory as Robespierre reigned in the Convention through the Jacobins club. For instance, an eminent magistrate at Geneva was sentenced to imprisonment for two months, to lose his office, and be disqualified from ever holding any other, *because he was leading an irregular life, and had entered into relations with Calvin's enemies.*

Calvin was a legislator to this extent: he originated the strict, sober, bourgeois, horribly depressing but irreproachable manners and morals which prevail in Geneva to this day, and which preceded the English type of manners, universally known by the name of Puritanism, which originated with the Cameronians, disciples of Cameron, one of the learned Frenchmen inspired by Calvin, and which Walter Scott has so well depicted! The poverty of a man, to all intent a sovereign, who treated with kings as their equal, who called upon them for money and armies, and who drew freely upon their treasuries for the poor and needy,—the poverty of such a man proves that thought, wielded as the sole instrument of domination, engenders political misers, men who enjoy with the brain, who, like the Jesuits, crave power for power's sake. Pitt, Luther, Calvin, Robespierre, all those Harpagons of domination, died without a sou. The inventory made at Calvin's lodging, after his death, which, *including his books,* amounted to fifty crowns, has been preserved by history: Luther's amounted to the same sum; indeed,

his widow, the celebrated Catherine de Bora, was obliged to solicit a pension of a hundred crowns, which was allotted to her by an elector of Germany. Potemkin, Mazarin, Richelieu, those men of thought and action, all three of whom created or paved the way for empires, left three hundred millions each. They had hearts, they loved women and the arts, they constructed and conquered; whereas, with the exception of Luther, whose wife was the Helen of that Iliad, none of the others had to reproach themselves for a single quickened heart-beat occasioned by a woman.

This greatly abridged explanation was necessary to make clear Calvin's position in Geneva.

In the early days of February, 1561, on one of those mild evenings which sometimes occur at that season on Lake Geneva, two horsemen arrived at the Pré-l'Evêque, so called from the former country-house of the Bishop of Geneva, banished thirty years before. These two men, who evidently were familiar with the laws of Geneva concerning the closing of the gates,—then very necessary, but extremely absurd to-day,—were riding toward Porte de Rives; but they stopped their horses abruptly at sight of a man of some fifty years, who was walking along the road, leaning on the arm of a female servant, and was plainly returning to the city; he was rather stout, and walked slowly and with difficulty, not raising one foot until the other was on the ground, and then with evident pain, for he wore round laced shoes of black velvet.

"It is he," said Chaudieu to the other horseman, who dismounted, threw his rein to his companion, and advanced with open arms toward the pedestrian.

The latter, who was, in fact, Jean Calvin, drew back to avoid the embrace, and bestowed a glance of exceeding sternness upon his disciple. At fifty years of age, Calvin seemed seventy. He was short and stout, and seemed all the shorter because excruciating suffering from calculus compelled him to bend double when he walked. His suffering from that cause was intensified by attacks of gout of the most malignant character. Any man would have trembled before that face, almost as broad as long, upon which, despite its rotundity, there was no more indication of amiability than on the face of the monster Henry VIII., whom Calvin strongly resembled; physical pain, which gave him no respite, was betrayed by the two deep wrinkles starting from the nose on either side, following the curve of the moustaches, and merging like them into the full gray beard. That face, although generally red and inflamed like a toper's, was marked with yellow patches; but, notwithstanding the black velvet cap which covered that enormous square head, one was able to admire a forehead of vast size and of the most perfect shape, beneath which gleamed a pair of brown eyes which emitted genuine flames in his paroxysms of wrath. It may have been due to his obesity, or his short, full neck, or because of his sleepless nights and constant toil, that Calvin's head

had settled between his broad shoulders, so that he could wear only a narrow fluted ruff, above which his face resembled Saint John the Baptist's on the charger. Between his moustaches and his beard, nestling like a rose, was his graceful, eloquent mouth, small and ruddy-lipped, marvellously perfect in shape. His face was divided by a square nose, remarkable for its flexibility throughout its whole length, and with a significant flatness at the end, in harmony with the prodigious mental force expressed by that imperial head. Although it was difficult to detect in those features traces of the weekly sick-headaches which attacked Calvin during the intervals of a slow fever by which he was consumed, physical pain, combated by study and will-power, gave to the whole face, although at first sight florid, a something terrible to behold; that impression was attributable to the color of the layer of fat due to the sedentary habits of the indefatigable worker, and bearing traces of the constant conflict between that valetudinarian temperament and one of the most powerful wills known in the history of the human mind. Even the mouth, charming as it was, wore an expression of cruelty. The chastity enjoined by far-reaching designs and exacted by a tendency to so many forms of disease, was written upon the face. There was regret in the serenity of that powerful brow, and grief in the expression of those eyes, whose tranquillity was terrifying.

Calvin's costume threw his head into bold relief, for he wore the famous black cloth gown, caught in

at the waist by a belt of black cloth with a copper buckle, which became the regular costume of Calvinist ministers, and which, offering no interest to the eye, concentrated the attention upon its wearer's face.

"I am in too great pain to embrace you, Théodore," said Calvin to the dashing cavalier.

Théodore de Bèze, at this time forty-two years of age, who had been admitted to the bourgeoisie of Geneva two years before, at Calvin's request, presented a most striking contrast to the awe-inspiring pastor whom he had made his sovereign. Calvin, like all bourgeois who rise to moral sovereignty, or like all originators of social systems, was consumed with jealousy. He detested his disciples, he would have no equals, he would not endure the slightest contradiction. But there was so much difference between himself and Théodore de Bèze; that fashionable cavalier, with his attractive face, full of instinctive courtesy, accustomed to frequent courts, seemed to him so utterly unlike all his uncivilized janizaries, that with him he laid aside his usual sentiments; he never was fond of him, for that crabbed legislator was utterly ignorant of the meaning of affection; but as he had no fear of finding in him a would-be successor, he liked to play with Théodore, as Richelieu at a later period played with his cat; he found him supple and cheerful. Seeing that De Bèze met with signal success in all his missions, he became attached to that polished instrument, whose inspiration and guide he believed himself

to be; so true is it that even the most unsociable men cannot do without a semblance of affection. Théodore was Calvin's spoiled child; the stern reformer did not scold him, he overlooked his irregularities, his amours, his fine clothes, and his refined speech. Perhaps Calvin was not sorry to prove that the Reformed religion could hold its own in respect of graceful manners with the adherents of the court. Théodore de Bèze wished to inculcate at Geneva a taste for art and literature and poetry, and Calvin listened to his plans without drawing his heavy gray eyebrows together. Thus the contrast in disposition and person between the two men was as great as the contrast in mental force.

Calvin responded to Chaudieu's very humble salutation with a slight inclination of the head. Chaudieu passed the reins of both horses through his right arm and followed those two great lights of the Reformation, walking at the left of De Bèze, who had Calvin on his right. Calvin's servant ran forward to prevent the closing of the Porte de Rives, informing the captain of the guard that the pastor had just had a very severe attack of pain.

Théodore de Bèze was a son of the commune of Vézelay, which was the first to join the Confederation; its interesting history has been written by one of the Thierrys. Thus the bourgeois spirit of resistance, endemic at Vézelay, contributed its share in the great uprising of the reformers, in the person of this man, who is certainly one of the most interesting figures in the annals of heresy.

"Are you still suffering?" Théodore asked Calvin.

"A Catholic would say like one damned," replied the reformer, with the bitterness which he injected into his lightest words. "Ah! I am nearing the end, my child! And what will become of you without me?"

"We will fight on by the light from your lips!" said Chaudieu.

Calvin smiled, his purple face assumed a gracious expression, and he looked favorably upon Chaudieu.

"Well, have you any news for me?" he continued. "Have they massacred many of our friends?" he asked, smiling and exhibiting a mocking joy in the gleam of his brown eyes.

"No," said Chaudieu, "everything is at peace."

"So much the worse, so much the worse!" cried Calvin. "Pacification in any form would be an evil, even if it were not always certain to be a snare. In persecution is our strength. Where should we be if the Church should swallow up the Reformed religion?"

"Indeed," said Théodore, "that is just what the queen-mother seems to want to do."

"She is quite capable of it," said Calvin. "I am studying that woman—"

"From here?" cried Chaudieu.

"Is there such a thing as distance for the mind?" rejoined Calvin, sternly, regarding the interruption as irreverent. "Catherine craves power, and women with that craving have neither honor nor faith. What is in the wind?"

"Well, she suggests a sort of council," said De Bèze.

"In the neighborhood of Paris?" inquired Calvin, abruptly.

"Yes!"

"Ah! so much the better!" said Calvin.

"And we will try to come to an understanding and prepare a public agreement to blend the two churches."

"Ah! if she had the courage to separate the French Church from the court of Rome and to create in France a patriarch as in the Greek Church!" cried the reformer, his eyes gleaming at the idea, which would make it possible for him to ascend a throne. "But, my son, can the niece of a pope be free to act? she wants to gain time."

"Do we not need time to repair our disaster at Amboise and organize a formidable resistance at all points in the kingdom?"

"She has sent away the Queen of Scotland," said Chaudieu.

"One less!" said Calvin, as they passed Porte de Rives; "Elizabeth of England will hold her in check for us. Two queens so near together will soon be at war: one is beautiful, and the other decidedly ugly, there's one source of irritation; then there's the question of illegitimacy."

He rubbed his hands, and there was something so ferocious in his joy that De Bèze shuddered; for he caught a glimpse of the sea of blood at which his master had been gazing for a moment.

"The Guises have angered the Bourbons," said De Bèze, after a pause, "they had a falling-out at Orléans."

"Very good," replied Calvin; "you would not believe me, my son, when, at the time of your last departure for Nérac, I told you that we should eventually stir up a war to the death between the two branches of the royal family of France! At last, I have a court, a king, a family, in my party. My doctrine has produced its full effect on the masses now. The bourgeois have understood me, henceforth they will call those persons idolaters who attend mass, who paint the walls of their temples and put pictures and statues in them. Ah! it is much easier for the people to demolish cathedrals and palaces than to discuss *justification by faith* or the *real presence!* Luther was a disputant; I am an army! he was a reasoner; I am a system! In fact, my children, he was merely an obstinate fellow—*taquin;*—I am a Tarquin! Yes, my faithful followers shall pull down churches, they shall shatter pictures, they shall make millstones out of statues, to grind the wheat of the people. There are associations of men in all states, I choose that there shall be only individuals! Associations resist too much, and see clearly where formless multitudes are blind! Now, we must combine with this militant doctrine political interests which will solidify it and supply the material of my armies. I have satisfied the logical arguments of economical minds, and the brains of thinkers, by the naked, unadorned worship which

IN GENEVA

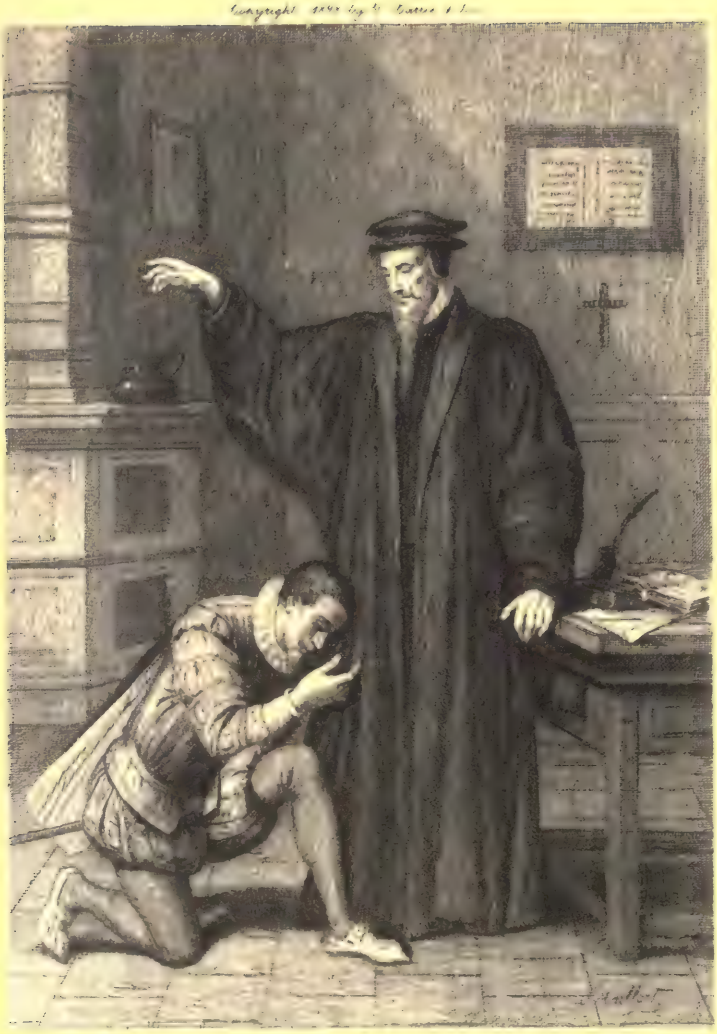
The Lord Bishop kissed the Lord Archbishop's coat and kissed it.

"O my master," he said, "how proud you are!"

"Very proud indeed are we here."

Lovers, "you would
to the time of your
ac, I told you that we should
a war to the death between the
of the royal family of France! At
a court, a king, a family, in my party.
its full effect on the
mass now. The bourgeois have understood me,
hence forth they will call those persons idolaters who
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IN GENEVA

Théodore de Bèze lifted the skirt of Calvin's coat and kissed it.

"O my master," he said, "how grand your are!"

"Unfortunately, I am dying, dear Théodore."



transports religion into the world of ideas. I have convinced the common people of the benefits of the suppression of ceremonies. It is for you, Théodore, to enlist selfish interests. Do not go beyond that. Everything is done, everything is said now, so far as the doctrine is concerned; do not add to it one iota! Why does Cameron, that humble Gascon pastor, meddle with writing?"

Calvin, De Bèze, and Chaudieu were climbing the streets of the upper city amid the throng of passers, and the throng paid no attention to those men who unloosed the passions of the throngs of other cities and ravaged France! After that terrifying tirade, they walked on in silence to the small Place Saint-Pierre, and across it to the pastor's house. On the second floor of that house, which can hardly be said to be famous, and of which no one ever speaks now in Geneva,—where, by the way, there is no statue of Calvin,—were his lodgings, consisting of three rooms with spruce floors and wainscoting, and the kitchen and maid-servant's room adjoining. The entrance, as in most of the bourgeois houses of Geneva, was through the kitchen, from which you entered a small room with two windows, used as reception-room, salon, and dining-room. The study, where Calvin's mind had struggled with physical pain for fourteen years, came next, and the bedroom next to that. Four oak chairs covered with tapestry and placed about a large square table comprised all the furniture of the salon. A white porcelain stove in a corner of the room gave forth a gentle warmth.

The walls were sheathed in unpainted spruce, with no attempt at decoration. Thus the bareness of his dwelling harmonized with the great reformer's sober, simple life.

"Well," said De Bèze, as they entered the house, taking advantage of Chaudieu's leaving them alone while he took the two horses to an inn near by, "what am I to do? Do you agree to the conference?"

"Assuredly," said Calvin. "You, my son, must do the fighting there. Be concise and unyielding. We none of us, neither the queen, nor the Guises, nor myself, propose that it shall result in any pacification which is not satisfactory to our respective selves. I have confidence in Duplessis-Mornay, we must give him the leading rôle. We are alone," he said, casting a suspicious glance into the kitchen, the door of which was ajar, disclosing two shirts and several collars hanging on a line to dry. "Go and close all the doors.—Well," he continued, when Théodore had done so, "we must induce the King of Navarre to join the Guises and the constable by advising him to abandon Queen Catherine de' Medici. Let us reap all the benefit we can from the weakness of that pitiful monarch. If he turns his back on the Italian, she, when she finds that she has lost that support, will necessarily join the Prince de Condé and Coligny. Perhaps this manœuvre will compromise her so completely that she will remain with us."

Théodore de Bèze lifted the skirt of Calvin's coat and kissed it.

"O my master," he said, "how grand you are!"

"Unfortunately, I am dying, dear Théodore. If I should die without seeing you again," he said in a low voice and in the ear of his minister of foreign affairs, "remember that there is a mighty blow to be struck by one of our martyrs!"

"Another Minard to be killed?"

"Something more than a pettifogging lawyer."

"A king?"

"Better still! a man who wants to be king."

"The Duc de Guise!" exclaimed Théodore, with an involuntary gesture of dismay.

"Even so," cried Calvin, fancying that he detected signs of refusal or opposition, and not noticing Chaudieu's entrance, "have we not the right to strike as we are struck? in darkness and in silence? May we not return wound for wound, death for death? Will the Catholics ever lose an opportunity to lay snares for us and massacre us? I hardly think it! Burn their churches! on with the work, my children. If you have any young men devoted to the cause—"

"I have," said Chaudieu.

"Use them as instruments of war! our triumph will justify any means. Le Balafré, that formidable warrior, is, like myself, more than a man; as I am a system, he is a dynasty, and he is capable of annihilating us! Therefore, death to the Lorrainer!"

"I should prefer a peaceful victory, brought about by time and by argument," said De Bèze.

"By time?" shouted Calvin, overturning his chair, "by argument? Why, are you mad? Argument!

argument make a conquest! Do you, then, who deal with men, know nothing of them, fool? The very thing that injures my doctrine, triple idiot, is that it is easily enforced by argument. By the lightning of Saint Paul, by the sword of the Strong, do you not see, Théodore, pumpkin-head that you are, what an impulse was given to my Reform by the catastrophe of Amboise? Ideas do not grow unless they are watered with blood! The assassination of the Duc de Guise would lead to a horrible persecution, and I pray for it with all my strength! Defeat is preferable to success. The Reform has its methods of inviting defeat, do you understand, donkey? whereas Catholicism is doomed if we win a single battle. But what are my lieutenants?—damp rags instead of men! stomachs on two legs! baptized baboons! O my God, wilt Thou give me ten years more of life? If I die too soon, the cause of the true religion is lost in the hands of such dolts! You are as great a fool as Antoine de Navarre! go, leave me, I must have a better negotiator! You are naught but an ass, a coxcomb, a poet! go and make your imitations of Catullus and Tibullus, and your acrostics! Away with you!"

The torture of the calculus was entirely vanquished by the flames of his wrath. The gout held its peace before that terrible excitement. Calvin's face was streaked with purple, like a tempestuous sky. His vast brow glistened. His eyes flashed fire. He was entirely unlike himself. He abandoned himself to that species of epileptic frenzy,

full of wild rage, which was a common occurrence with him; but, being impressed by the silence of his two hearers, and observing Chaudieu as he whispered to De Bèze: "The Burning Bush of Horeb!" he ceased to speak, sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands, whose knotted veins throbbed visibly despite their thickness.

A few moments later, still shuddering in the last blasts of that tempest engendered by the chastity of his life, he said to them, in a voice trembling with emotion:

"My vices, which are numerous, cost me less to overcome than my *impatience!* Ah! savage beast, shall I never conquer you?" he added, striking his breast.

"My dear master," said De Bèze, in a soothing voice, and taking his hands, which he kissed, "Jupiter thunders, but he knows how to smile."

Calvin gazed at his disciple with a softened expression, and said to him:

"Try to understand me, my friends."

"I understand that the shepherds of whole peoples have to carry terrible burdens," replied Théodore. "You have a world on your shoulders."

"I have," said Chaudieu, whom the master's diatribe had rendered thoughtful, "I have three martyrs upon whom we can rely. Stuart, who killed the president, is at liberty—"

"Nay!" said Calvin, gently, smiling like all great men when they bring back fair weather to their faces, as if they were ashamed of having allowed

the storm to rage there. "I know mankind. A man may kill one president, but he doesn't kill two."

"Is this step absolutely necessary?" said De Bèze.

"Again?" said Calvin, inflating his nostrils. "Nay, leave me, you will drive me into a frenzy again. Go hence with my decision. Do you, Chaudieu, follow the path you are now following, and maintain your flock in Paris. May God guide you!—Dinah! light my friends to the street."

"Will you not permit me to embrace you?" said De Bèze, with deep emotion. "Which of us can know what may happen to-morrow? We may be arrested notwithstanding our safe-conducts—"

"And yet you would spare them?" queried Calvin, embracing him.

He took Chaudieu's hand.

"Above all things," he said, "no Huguenots, no reformers! be Calvinists! Speak of Calvinism only! Alas! this is not ambition, for I am dying! but we must destroy every vestige of Luther, even to the words Lutheran and Lutheranism."

"But, O divine man," said Chaudieu, "well do you merit such honor!"

"Uphold the uniformity of the doctrine, allow no more examination or remodelling. We are lost if new sects go forth from our bosom."

Anticipating for a moment the occurrences with which this Study is concerned, and in order to have done with Théodore de Bèze, who went to Paris with

Chaudieu, we will remark that Poltrot, who discharged a pistol at the Duc de Guise eighteen months later, confessed under torture that he had been incited to that crime by Théodore de Bèze; he retracted that confession, however, during the subsequent tortures. So that Bossuet, after weighing all the historical arguments, did not consider that the conception of that crime should be charged to Théodore de Bèze. But, since Bossuet's time, a dissertation, at first sight of trivial importance, on the subject of a famous chanson, has led a compiler of the eighteenth century to prove that the chanson on the death of the Duc de Guise, which was sung throughout France by the Huguenots, was the work of Théodore de Bèze, and it was proved at the same time that the famous lament upon Marlborough was plagiarized from the one written by Théodore de Bèze.*

* See the note at the end of this volume.

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On the day when Théodore de Bèze and Chaudieu reached Paris, the court returned thither from Reims, where Charles IX. had been crowned. That ceremony, which, under Catherine's direction, was made very imposing and the occasion of magnificent fêtes, had enabled her to assemble the leaders of all parties about her. After studying all the different conflicting interests and parties, she was at liberty to choose between these alternatives: either to enlist them all in support of the throne, or to oppose them to one another. The Connétable de Montmorency, Catholic of Catholics, whose nephew, the Prince de Condé, was the leader of the party of the Reformation, and whose sons were inclined to that religion, inveighed against the queen-mother's alliance with the reformers. On their side, the Guises were endeavoring to win over Antoine de Bourbon, a prince devoid of character, and to enlist him in their party; with which attempt his wife, the Queen of Navarre, being warned by De Bèze, did not interfere. These obstacles made an impression on Catherine, whose newly-born authority needed a period of tranquillity; so she awaited impatiently the reply of Calvin, to whom Chaudieu and De Bèze had been sent by the Prince de Condé, the King of Navarre, Coligny, D'Andelot, and the Cardinal de Châtillon. But the queen-mother, meanwhile,

was true to her promises to the Prince de Condé. The chancellor put an end to the procedure against Christophe, by transferring the cause to the Parliament of Paris, which quashed the judgment of the commission by declaring it to be powerless to try a prince of the blood. At the solicitation of the Guises and the queen-mother, the Parliament began the prosecution anew. The papers taken from La Sagne had been handed to Catherine, who burned them. The delivery of those papers was the first pledge, fruitlessly given the queen-mother by the Guises. The Parliament, finding the proofs unsatisfactory, restored the prince to all his privileges, property, and honors. Christophe, who was set free at the time of the excitement at Orléans on the king's accession, was acquitted at once, and, in recompense for his sufferings, was admitted as an advocate to the Parliament through the exertions of Monsieur de Thou.

The triumvirate, that future coalition of interests menaced by Catherine's first acts, was in process of formation under her eyes. Just as in chemistry hostile substances always part at the first shock which disturbs their forced union, so in politics an alliance of opposing interests is always of brief duration. Catherine fully realized that, sooner or later, she would certainly return to the Guises and the constable to join forces with them against the Huguenots. The proposed conference, which tickled the self-esteem of the orators of all parties, which was intended to provide an imposing ceremony to

follow that of the coronation, and to distract attention from the bloody carpet of the religious war already inaugurated, was quite useless in the eyes of the Guises as well as in Catherine's. The Catholics would be the losers, for the Huguenots, on the pretext of conferring, would seize the opportunity to proclaim their doctrine in the face of all France, under the protection of the king and his mother. The Cardinal de Lorraine, cajoled by Catherine with the idea of vanquishing the heretics by the eloquence of the princes of the Church, persuaded his brother to consent. Six months of peace were a great boon to the queen-mother.

A trivial occurrence was very near compromising this power which Catherine was building up so laboriously. The following scene, handed down by historians, occurred on the very day when the envoys from Geneva arrived at Coligny's house on Rue Béthisy, near the Louvre. At the coronation ceremony, Charles IX., who was very fond of Amyot, his tutor, appointed him Grand Almoner of France. This affection was shared by the Duc d'Anjou, afterward Henri III., Amyot's other pupil. During the journey from Reims to Paris, Catherine was informed of this appointment by the Gondis. She counted upon that office in the gift of the crown to obtain a firm supporter in the Church in order to have somebody to oppose to the Cardinal de Lorraine; she intended to bestow it upon the Cardinal de Tournon, in order to have in him, as in L'Hôpital, a *second crutch*; such was the phrase she used. On arriving

at the Louvre, she sent for the tutor. Her wrath was so great when she saw the havoc wrought in her policy by the ambition of that upstart cobbler's son, that she addressed him in strange words, which are repeated by some memoir-writers:

"What! I make the Guises, the Colignys, the constables, the House of Navarre and the Prince de Condé eat dirt, and I must have around my neck a miserable little priest like you, who won't be satisfied with the bishopric of Auxerre!"

Amyot apologized. In truth, he had not asked for anything; the king, of his own free will, had honored him with that post of which he, a poor tutor, deemed himself unworthy.

"Rest assured, master," replied Catherine,—such was the title which Charles IX. and Henri III. gave to that great author,—"that you won't be on your feet twenty-four hours hence if you don't make your pupil change his mind."

Between death, threatened with so little circumlocution, and resignation of the most considerable ecclesiastical office under the crown, the cobbler's son, who had become very covetous and perhaps cherished the ambition to wear a cardinal's hat, adopted a temporizing policy; he went into hiding in the abbey of Saint-Germain. At his very first dinner, Charles IX. missed Amyot, and asked for him. Some Guisard probably informed the king of what had taken place between Amyot and the queen-mother.

"What! has he been put out of sight because I made him grand almoner?" he asked.

He went to his mother's apartments in the violent frame of mind into which children are always thrown when one of their caprices is thwarted.

"Madame," he inquired, as he entered, "did I not unhesitatingly sign the letter which you asked me to sign for the Parliament—the letter by virtue of which you are to govern my kingdom? Did you not promise me, when you handed it to me, that my will should be yours? and yet the only favor I have cared to bestow arouses your jealousy! The chancellor talks of having me declared of age at fourteen, three years from now, and you choose to treat me like a baby. I will be king, by God! and king as my father and grandfather were!"

The tone in which her son spoke, and his manner, were a revelation to Catherine of his true character; it was as if she had received a blow in the breast.

"He speaks thus to me, to me who made him king!" she thought.—"Monsieur," she replied, "the office of king is a very difficult one in these days, and you are unacquainted as yet with the master-minds with whom you have to deal. You will never have any other candid and reliable friend than your mother, other retainers than those who have been long attached to her service, and except for whose efforts you might not be alive to-day. The Guises have designs upon your crown and your person alike, mark that. If they could sew me up in a sack and toss me into yonder river," she said, waving her hand toward the Seine, "it would be done to-night. These Lorraines feel that I am the lioness defending

her whelps, who thrusts back the hands which they presumptuously reach out for the crown. For whom, for what does your tutor stand? where are his alliances? what influence has he? what services will he render you? what weight will his words have? Instead of propping up your power, you have weakened it. The Cardinal de Lorraine threatens you, he plays the king, he keeps his hat on his head in presence of the first prince of the blood; was it not of the utmost importance, therefore, to oppose to him another cardinal endowed with authority superior to his? Will Amyot, this cobbler, capable of nothing more than tying his shoestrings, be the man to break a lance with him? However, you are fond of Amyot, you have appointed him! let your first wish be gratified, monsieur! But hereafter, before making up your mind, consult me in all friendliness. Heed reasons of State, and your boyish good sense will perhaps come to the same decision as my long experience, when you know the difficulties that lie in your path."

"You will give me back my master!" said the king, who had not listened overcarefully to his mother, seeing only reproof in her rejoinder.

"Yes, you shall have him," she replied. "But neither he nor that brutal Cypierre will teach you how to reign."

"You shall do that, mother," he said, mollified by his triumph and laying aside the threatening, sullen expression which his features naturally wore.

Catherine sent Gondi in search of the new grand almoner. When the Florentine had discovered Amyot's retreat, and the bishop had been told that the courtier was sent by the queen, he was terror-stricken and would not leave the abbey. In that extremity, Catherine was obliged to write to the tutor herself in such terms that he returned and received the assurance of her protection, but only on condition that he would follow her instructions blindly in his relations with Charles IX.

This little domestic hurricane having blown over, Catherine, who had been absent from the Louvre more than a year, took counsel with her friends as to the course of conduct to be adopted with the young king, whom Cypierre had complimented upon his firmness.

"What is to be done?"—She propounded the question to the Gondis, Ruggieri, Birague, and Chiverni, recently appointed governor and chancellor to the Duc de Anjou.

"First of all," said Birague, "replace Cypierre. He is no courtier, he would never accede to your views, and would think that the proper discharge of his functions required him to thwart you."

"Whom can I trust?" exclaimed the queen.

"One of us," said Birague.

"Faith," said Gondi, "I will promise to make the king as easy to handle as the King of Navarre."

"You allowed the late king to die in order to save your other children; now do as the great noblemen do at Constantinople—simply make this one's

fits of temper and his caprices of no consequence," said Albert de Gondi. "He loves art, poetry, hunting, and a little girl whom he saw at Orléans; these are quite enough to occupy his thoughts."

"So you would like to be the king's governor, eh?" said Catherine to the abler of the two Gondis.

"If you choose to give me the authority essential for a governor, perhaps it will be necessary to make me a marshal of France and a duke. Cypierre is too insignificant a man to continue to fill that place. Hereafter, the governor of a king of France should be a marshal and a duke, or something equivalent to that."

"He is right," said Birague.

"Poet and sportsman," said Catherine, in a musing tone.

"We will hunt and we will love!" cried Gondi.

"At all events," said Chiverni, "you are sure of Amyot, who will always be afraid of poison in case he disobeys you, and with Gondi you will hold the king in leash."

"You were resigned to the loss of one son to save your other three sons and the crown, and you must have the courage to keep this one *occupied*, in order to save the kingdom, perhaps to save yourself," said Ruggieri.

"He has seriously offended me," said Catherine.

"He does not know all that he owes you; and if he did know it, you would be in danger," observed Birague, in all seriousness, dwelling on the words.

"It is agreed," rejoined Catherine, upon whom that remark produced a very pronounced effect, "you shall be the king's governor, Gondi. The king must certainly repay me for my assent to his bestowing a favor on that flat-footed bishop, by doing something for one of my friends. That knave Amyot has lost his cardinal's hat; yes, as long as I live I will oppose the Pope's putting it on his head! We should have been very strong with the Cardinal de Tournon on our side. What a trio the grand almoner, L'Hôpital, and De Thou would have made! As for the bourgeois of Paris, I am devising a method by which my son may wheedle them, and we shall find a sure support in them."

Gondi actually became a marshal, was created Duc de Retz, and appointed governor to the king a few days thereafter.

As this little council came to an end, the Cardinal de Tournon announced to the queen the envoys of Calvin; Admiral Coligny accompanied them to ensure them respectful treatment at the Louvre. The queen at once summoned her redoubtable body-guard of maids of honor and passed into the reception-hall, built by her husband, which does not exist in the Louvre of to-day.

In those days, the stairway of the Louvre was in the Tour de l'Horloge. Catherine's apartments were in the old buildings, which are still standing, in part, on the courtyard of the Musée. The present staircase of the Musée was built on the site of the *salle des ballets*. A ballet at that period was a

species of dramatic entertainment in which the whole court participated.

The passions aroused by the Revolution caused credit to be given to a most laughable error concerning Charles IX., apropos of the Louvre. During the Revolution, a popular belief adverse to that king, whose character was misrepresented, made him a perfect monster. Chénier's tragedy was written under the influence of an inscription placed upon the window of the projecting portion of the Louvre on the side of the quay. It consisted of these words: "*It was from this window that Charles IX., of execrable memory, fired upon French citizens.*"—It is fitting to remind future historians and sober-minded persons that all that part of the Louvre which is to-day called the old Louvre, and which projects like a hatchet on the quay, connecting the salon with the Louvre by the so-called Apollo gallery, and the Louvre with the Tuileries by the halls of the Musée, did not exist under Charles IX. The greater part of the site of the present façade on the quay, and of the so-called Garden of the Infanta, was occupied by the Hôtel de Bourbon, belonging to the House of Navarre. It was physically impossible for Charles IX. to fire from the Louvre, as it was under Henri II., upon a boatload of Huguenots crossing the river, or even to see the Seine from the windows, now walled-up, of that edifice. Even if scholars and libraries did not possess maps on which the Louvre under Charles IX. is accurately represented, the monument itself bears the refutation of this error.

All the kings who have co-operated in building that vast pile have invariably left upon it their cipher or an anagram of some sort. Now, that venerable and to-day blackened portion of the Louvre, which looks upon the Garden of the Infanta and projects upon the quay, bears the ciphers of Henri III. and Henri IV., which are very different from Henri II.'s, who united his H with the two C's of Catherine, forming a sort of D which misleads superficial observers. Henri IV. was able to add his Hôtel de Bourbon, with its gardens and appurtenances, to the Louvre domain. He first conceived the idea of joining Catherine de' Medici's palace to the Louvre by means of its unfinished galleries, whose valuable carvings have been sadly neglected. Even if the plan of Paris as it was under Charles IX. and the ciphers of Henry III. or Henri IV. did not exist, the difference in architecture would unsparingly contradict the calumny. The vermiculated protuberances of the Hôtel de la Force, and of that part of the Louvre, mark the transition from the so-called Renaissance architecture to the architectural style in fashion under Henri III., Henri IV., and Louis XIII.—This archæological digression, which, by the way, is in the same line with the descriptions with which this narrative begins, enables us to form an idea of the real appearance of that other corner of Paris, of which nothing exists to-day save the portion to which we refer, where the superb bas-reliefs are deteriorating day by day.

When the court learned that the queen was about

to give audience to Théodore de Bèze and Chaudieu, introduced by Admiral de Coligny, all those courtiers who were entitled to enter the hall of audience hastened thither in order to witness the interview. It was then about six o'clock; the admiral had just supped, and was picking his teeth as he ascended the staircase of the Louvre between the two reformers. The constant handling of a toothpick had grown to be an incurable habit in the admiral, and he would use one upon all his teeth, one after another, while meditating a retreat on the battle-field.—*Distrust the admiral's toothpick, the constable's "no" and Catherine's "yes,"* was a proverbial expression of the time at court. At the time of the Saint Bartholomew, the populace perpetrated a ghastly epigram on Coligny's dead body, which lay for three days at Montfaucon, by inserting a mammoth toothpick between his teeth. The chroniclers thought that shocking jest worthy to be recorded. That trivial act in the midst of a terrible catastrophe well depicts the character of the Parisian populace, which abundantly deserves the jocose quip in Boileau's line:

"The Frenchman, born mischievous, created the guillotine."

At all times, the Parisian has cracked jokes before, during, and after the most horrible revolutions.

Théodore de Bèze was dressed like a courtier, in black silk stockings, strapped shoes, tight-fitting breeches, a slashed doublet of black silk, with the

short velvet cloak over which fell a snow-white fluted ruff. He wore a moustache and imperial, had a sword at his side, and carried a cane. Whoever walks through the galleries of the Louvre, or looks over Odieuvre's collections, knows his round, almost jovial face, with its sparkling eyes, surmounted by the unusually ample forehead which is characteristic of the prose-writers and poets of that time. De Bèze had an attractive manner, which was very serviceable to him. He formed a striking contrast to Coligny, whose stern face is familiar to all, and with the sour, bilious Chaudieu, who wore the ministerial costume and the starched band of the Calvinists. What takes place in our own time in the Chamber of Deputies and what doubtless took place in the Convention may help us to understand how, in that court, at that epoch, men who were to be at daggers drawn six months later, and to wage desperate war upon one another, could meet on friendly terms, and talk courteously and jestingly together.

As he entered the hall, Birague, who was to advise in cold blood the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, and the Cardinal de Lorraine, who was to enjoin upon his servant Besme, on that occasion, not to miss the admiral, stepped forward to meet Coligny, and the Piedmontese said to him, with a smile:

"Well, my dear admiral, so you take it upon yourself to present these gentlemen from Geneva?"

"Perhaps you will impute it to me as a crime,"

retorted the admiral, jocosely, "whereas, if you had undertaken it yourself, you would claim that you were entitled to credit for it."

"It is said that Sieur Calvin is very ill," said the Cardinal de Lorraine to Théodore de Bèze. "I trust that we shall not be suspected of poisoning his soup."

"Ah! monseigneur, you would lose too much by it!" replied De Bèze, shrewdly.

The Duc de Guise, who had been eyeing Chaudieu, gazed earnestly at his brother and Birague, both of whom were taken aback by that remark.

"*Vrai-Dieu!*" cried the cardinal, "the heretics are not heterodox in the matter of sharp politics."

To forestall any possible difficulty, the queen, who was announced at that moment, determined to remain standing. She began by conversing with the constable, who animadverted vigorously upon the scandal of receiving envoys from Calvin.

"But you see, my dear constable, that we receive them without formality."

"Madame," said the admiral, approaching the queen, "these are the two professors of the new religion who have conversed with Calvin, and who bear his instructions relative to a conference at which the churches of France may adjust their differences."

"This is Monsieur Théodore de Bèze, to whom my wife is much attached," said the King of Navarre, coming forward and taking Théodore by the hand.

"And this is Chaudieu," cried the Prince de

Condé. "*My friend* the Duc de Guise knows his brother, the captain; perhaps he will not be sorry to know the minister," he added, glancing at Le Balafré.

That gasconade made the whole court laugh, even Catherine herself.

"Faith," replied the Duc de Guise, "I am delighted to meet a fellow who knows so well how to select his men and to employ them in their proper spheres. One of your friends," he said to the minister, "endured the extraordinary question without dying, yes, and without admitting anything; I consider myself a brave man, but I am not sure that I could stand it as he did!"

"Humph!" said Ambroise Paré, "you never said a word when I pulled the spear-head out of your face at Calais."

Catherine, standing in the centre of the semicircle described by her maids of honor and her courtiers, at the right and left, maintained absolute silence. Scrutinizing the two famous reformers, she tried to penetrate their thoughts with the steadfast gaze of her beautiful, speaking black eyes; she studied them closely.

"One seems to be the scabbard, the other the blade," said Albert de Gondi, in her ear.

"Well, messieurs," said Catherine, at last, unable to restrain a smile, "so your master has given you leave to hold a public conference, at which you may be converted by the words of new Fathers of the Church, who are the glory of our realm?"

"We have no master save the Lord," said Chaudieu.

"Oh! surely you recognize some little authority in the King of France?" queried Catherine, with a smile, interrupting the minister.

"Aye, and much in the queen," said De Bèze, bowing.

"You will see," she replied, "that the heretics will be my most obedient subjects."

"Ah! madame," cried Coligny, "what a glorious kingdom we would make for you! Europe reaps immense advantage from our divisions. It has seen one-half of the people of France arrayed against the other half for fifty years past."

"Well, well! are we here to hear anthems sung to the glory of the heretics?" interposed the constable, roughly.

"No, but to bring them to repentance," said the Cardinal de Lorraine, in his ear, "and we should do well to try to coax them by a little gentleness."

"Do you know what I would have done in the time of our king's father?" growled Anne de Montmorency; "I would have called the provost to hang these two flat-footed knaves high and quickly, on the gibbet of the Louvre."

"Well, messieurs, who are the professors who will meet us in argument?" said the queen, imposing silence on the constable, with a glance.

"Duplessis-Mornay and Théodore de Bèze will be our leaders," said Chaudieu.

"The court will go, doubtless, to the château of

Saint-Germain, and as it would be unbecoming for this *colloquy* to be held in the royal residence, we will hold it in the little village of Poissy," said Catherine.

"Shall we be safe there, madame?" inquired Chaudieu.

"Ah!" replied the queen, with a touch of ingenuousness, "you will know how to take precautions. Monsieur l'Amiral will have an understanding on that subject with my cousins of Guise and Montmorency."

"Plague take it!" said the constable. "I'll have nothing to do with it."

"What do you do to your sectaries to give them such strength of character?" said the queen, leading Chaudieu aside a few steps. "My furrier's son was sublime."

"We have faith!" replied Chaudieu.

At that moment, the hall was dotted with groups discussing with much animation the projected meeting, which, from the queen's characterization of it, had already taken the name of the "Colloquy of Poissy." Catherine looked at Chaudieu, and said:

"Yes, a new faith!"

"Oh! madame, if you were not blinded by your alliance with the court of Rome, you would see that we have returned to the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, which, by establishing the equality of souls, has given us all equal rights on earth."

"Do you consider yourself Calvin's equal?" queried the queen, shrewdly. "Nonsense, we are

equal only in church. But, really, to talk about loosening the bonds between the people and the throne!" cried Catherine. "You are not heretics simply, you rebel against obeying the king, while you throw off allegiance to the Pope."

She left him abruptly, and returned to Théodore de Bèze.

"I rely upon you, monsieur," she said, "to conduct this colloquy in good faith. Take all the time you want."

"I supposed," said Chaudieu to the Prince de Condé, the King of Navarre, and Admiral de Coligny, "that affairs of State were treated more seriously."

"Oh! we all know what we want," said the Prince de Condé, exchanging a knowing glance with Théodore de Bèze.

The hunchback left his partisans in order to keep an appointment. This great Prince de Condé, this leader of a party, was one of the most favored gallants of the court; the two loveliest women of the time fought for him with such desperation that the Maréchale de Saint-André, the wife of the future triumvir, gave him her fine estate of Saint-Valery in order to prevail over the Duchesse de Guise, wife of the man who but a short time before had done his utmost to compass his death by the axe; being unable to seduce the Duc de Nemours from his intrigue with Mademoiselle de Rohan, she bestowed her favors, meanwhile, upon the leader of the reformers.

"How different from Geneva!" said Chaudieu to Théodore de Bèze, as they stood on the little bridge of the Louvre.

"These people are more lively; and for that very reason I cannot understand why they are so treacherous."

"Fight treachery with more treachery," said Chaudieu, in his companion's ear. "I have *saints* in Paris on whom I can rely, and I propose to make a prophet of Calvin. Christophe will rid us of the most dangerous of our enemies."

"The queen-mother, for whose sake the poor devil endured the question, has already caused him to be admitted as an advocate before the Parliament, and an advocate is more a tale-bearer than an assassin. Remember Avenelles, who sold the secret of our first uprising."

"I know Christophe," said Chaudieu, confidently, as he and the envoy from Geneva parted.

*

Several days after Catherine's reception of Calvin's secret ambassadors, and near the close of that same year,—for the year began at Easter in those days, the present calendar not being adopted until the next reign,—Christophe was lying in an easy-chair, on that side of the fireplace from which he could see the river, in the large, dark living-room in which this drama began. His feet were resting on a stool. Mademoiselle Lecamus and Babette Lallier had just renewed the bandages saturated with a preparation brought by Ambroise, whom Catherine had instructed to look after Christophe. Once recovered by his family, the boy became the object of the most devoted attentions. Babette, with her father's consent, came to the Lecamus house every morning and did not leave until evening. Christophe was the object of the wondering admiration of the apprentices, and strange tales were rife throughout the quarter, which surrounded him with a mysterious, poetic halo. He had undergone the question and the celebrated Ambroise Paré was exerting all his skill to save him. What had he done to deserve such treatment? Neither Christophe nor his father had a word to say on that subject. Catherine, now all-powerful, found it to her interest to hold her peace, as did the Prince de Condé. The visits of Ambroise, who was surgeon to the

king and the House of Guise, and yet was permitted by the latter and the queen-mother to attend a young man accused of heresy, tended to involve in strange confusion an incident which nobody could understand. Lastly, the curé of Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs came several times to see his church-warden's son, and those visits rendered still more inexplicable the causes of Christophe's condition.

The old syndic, who had mapped out a plan of procedure, gave evasive replies to his confrères, to the tradesmen and the friends who spoke to him about his son: "I am very lucky, gossip, to have saved him!—What can you expect? one must never put one's finger between tree and bark!—My son put his hand in the fire and took from it enough to burn my house down!—They took advantage of his youth, and we bourgeois never get anything but shame and misfortune from fawning on the great.—This has decided me to make my boy a lawyer, the Palais de Justice will teach him to weigh his acts and his words.—The young queen, who is in Scotland now, had a good deal to do with it; but my son may have been imprudent, too!—I have suffered cruelly myself.—This may lead to my giving up business, for I don't propose to go to court any more.—My son has had enough of the Reformation now; it has broken his arms and legs. Except for Ambroise, where should I be?"

Thanks to remarks of this sort and to his prudent conduct, it was declared in the quarter that Christophe was no longer afflicted with Protestantism.

Everyone thought it natural that the old syndic should try to get his son a place in the Parliament, and the curé's visits no longer seemed extraordinary. Engrossed by the syndic's misfortunes, they did not detect his ambition, which would have seemed monstrous to them.

The young advocate, after lying three months on the bed which had been prepared for him in the old hall, had been sitting up about a week and could not yet walk without crutches. Babette's love and his mother's tender care had touched Christophe deeply; now, while he was confined to his bed, those two women had lectured him pitilessly on the subject of religion. President de Thou paid his godson a visit, and talked to him in fatherly fashion. Christophe, now that he was an advocate in Parliament, ought to be a Catholic, he would be bound by his oath to be; but the president, having no doubt of his orthodoxy, gravely added these words:

"My child, you have been subjected to a cruel test. I have no idea myself of the reason that Messieurs de Guise had for treating you so; I entreat you to lead a tranquil life henceforth, and to take no part in any disturbances; for the favor of the king and queen will not be bestowed on brewers of storms. You are not of enough consequence to fly in the king's face as Messieurs de Guise do. If you wish to be a counsellor in Parliament some day, remember that you can obtain that dignified office only by devoted attachment to the royal cause."

However, neither President de Thou's visit, nor Babette's fascinations, nor the entreaties of Mademoiselle Lecamus, his mother, had shaken the faith of the martyr of the Reformation. Christophe was the more deeply attached to his religion because he had suffered so cruelly for it.

"My father will never allow me to marry a heretic," whispered Babette.

Christophe replied only by tears, which made the pretty girl silent and pensive.

Old Lecamus preserved his dignity as father and syndic; he watched his son and said little. The old man, after he had recovered his dear Christophe, was almost dissatisfied with himself; he repented of having showered all his affection upon that only son; but he secretly admired him. At no time in his life did the syndic set more machinery at work to attain his ends; for he saw the ripened crop whose seed he had sown with such patient toil, and he wished to gather it all. A few days before the morning of which we write, he had had a long conversation with Christophe, in which he had tried to discover the secret of his son's obstinacy. Christophe, who did not lack ambition, had faith in the Prince de Condé. The generous words of the prince, who was simply carrying on his princely profession, were graven in his heart; but he did not know that Condé had cursed him bitterly, saying to himself: "A Gascon would have understood me!" when the boy called out a touching farewell to him through the bars of his dungeon at Orléans.

Despite this feeling of admiration for the prince, Christophe also cherished the profoundest respect for Catherine, the great queen, who had explained to him with a glance that it was absolutely necessary that she should sacrifice him, and who, during his torture, had given him an unreserved promise in a half-shed tear. In the profound silence of the ninety days and nights of his convalescence, the new advocate reviewed the events at Blois and at Orléans. He estimated, in spite of himself, so to speak, the respective advantages of those two protections. He wavered between the queen and the prince. He certainly had been more serviceable to Catherine than to the reformers, and in a young man both heart and mind were certain to incline toward the queen, not so much because he had served her better as because she was a woman. Under such circumstances, a man will always hope for a greater reward from a woman than from a man.

"I sacrificed myself for her, what will she do for me?"

He asked himself that question almost involuntarily, remembering the tone in which she had said: "*Povero mio!*" It is hard to realize how personal a man's thoughts become when he is sick in bed and alone. Everything, even to the exclusive attentions of which he is the object, leads him to think of himself alone. By dint of exaggerating the Prince de Condé's obligations to him, Christophe expected to be offered some important office at the

court of Navarre. This child, still a novice in politics, forgot that the anxieties of their position and their rapid progress through men and events engross the minds of party leaders; and he forgot it the more readily because he was practically in secret confinement in that dark old hall. Every party is necessarily ungrateful while it is fighting; and when it triumphs, it has too many people to reward not to continue to be ungrateful. Soldiers submit to this ingratitude; but leaders turn against the new master with whom they have marched so long on a footing of equality. Christophe, who alone remembered his own sufferings, already numbered himself among the leaders of the Reformation and proclaimed himself one of its martyrs. Lecamus, that old wolf of trade, far-sighted and shrewd, had succeeded at last in divining his son's secret thoughts; so that all his manœuvres were based upon the natural hesitation of which Christophe was the victim.

"Wouldn't it be a fine thing," he had said to Babette the night before, in family conclave, "to be the wife of a counsellor in Parliament? You would be called *Madame!*"

"You are mad, gossip!" said Lallier. "In the first place, where would you get the ten thousand crowns a year in real estate that a counsellor must have, and from whom would you purchase a seat? To get your son into Parliament, the queen-mother and the regent would have to be interested in him, and he smells a little too strong of the stake for them to help him."

"What would you give to see your daughter the wife of a counsellor?"

"You want to see the bottom of my purse, old fox!" said Lallier.

Counsellor of Parliament! That phrase rang in Christophe's ears.

A long time after the colloquy, one morning when Christophe was gazing at the river, which reminded him of the scene with which this narrative begins, of the Prince de Condé, La Renaudie, and Chaudieu, of his journey to Blois,—in a word, of all his hopes,—the syndic came and sat beside him, making a feeble attempt to conceal a joyous air beneath an affectation of gravity.

"My son," he said, "after what took place between you and the leaders in the Tumult of Amboise, they owed you so much that the House of Navarre ought to look out for your future."

"Yes," said Christophe.

"Very good," continued his father, "I made a formal request in your behalf for permission to purchase an office in the magistracy of Béarn. Our good friend Paré undertook to deliver the letters which I wrote in your name to the Prince de Condé and Queen Jeanne. Now read the reply from Monsieur de Pibrac, Vice-Chancellor of Navarre.

"TO SIEUR LECAMUS, *Syndic of the Guild of Furriers:*

"Monseigneur le Prince de Condé instructs me to express to you his regret that he is unable to do anything for his companion in the Saint-Aignan Tower, whom he remembers perfectly, and to whom, for the moment, he offers the position of

gendarme in his company, where he will be well placed to make his way like the brave man that he is.

"The Queen of Navarre awaits an opportunity to reward Sieur Christophe, and will not let it escape her.

"And with this, Monsieur le Syndic, we pray God to have you in His keeping.

"PIBRAC,

"*Chancellor of Navarre.*"

"*Nérac.*"

"Nérac, Pibrac, crac!" said Babette. "You can't expect anything from the Gascons, they think of no one but themselves."

Old Lecamus glanced at his son with a mocking expression.

"He proposes to put a poor boy on horseback, who had his knees and ankles crushed for him!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Lecamus; "what a ghastly joke!"

"I see little chance of your being a magistrate in Navarre," said the syndic.

"I should like right well to know what Queen Catherine would do for me, if I were to call upon her," said Christophe, utterly discomfited.

"She promised you nothing," said the old tradesman, "but I am certain that she would remember your sufferings and not laugh at you. But how could she make a bourgeois and a Protestant a counsellor of Parliament?"

"Why, Christophe has not abjured!" cried Babette. "He can confine his religious opinions to himself, surely."

"The Prince de Condé would be less contemptuous

with a counsellor of the Parliament of Paris," said Lecamus.

"Counsellor, father! is it possible?"

"Yes, if you don't interfere with what I propose to do for you. Here's my gossip Lallier who would gladly give two hundred thousand livres if I put as much more with it, to buy a fine seignorial estate with a provision for descent in the male line, and we will give it to you for your dowry."

"And I will add something more for a house in Paris," said Lallier.

"Well, Christophe?" queried Babette.

"You are reckoning without the queen," was the young advocate's reply.

A few days after this bitter disillusionment, an apprentice handed Christophe the following laconic note:

"Chaudieu wishes to see his son."

"Let him come in!" exclaimed Christophe.

"O my blessed martyr!" cried the minister, as he entered the room and embraced the advocate, "have you recovered from your injuries?"

"Yes, thanks to Paré!"

"Thanks to God, who gave you the strength to endure the torture! But what do I hear? you have been received as an advocate, you have taken the oath of allegiance, you have acknowledged the harlot, the Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church?"

"It was my father's wish."

"But must we not leave our fathers, children, wives, everything, and endure all for the blessed

cause of Calvinism? Ah! Christophe, Calvin, the great Calvin, the whole party, the world, the future, rely upon your courage, your grandeur of soul! We must have your life."

There is this remarkable characteristic of the human mind, that the most self-sacrificing man, even while sacrificing himself, builds a romance of hope in the most perilous emergencies. Thus when the prince, the soldier, and the minister, on the river under Pont au Change, had asked Christophe to carry to Catherine that treaty, which, if discovered, was likely to cost him his life, the child relied upon his wit, his intelligence, chance, and had gone boldly forward between those terrible enemies, the Guises and Catherine, where he had just escaped being crushed to death. During the torture, he said to himself:

"I shall get through this! it is only pain!"

But at that brutal demand: "Die!" made upon a boy who was still almost helpless, hardly recovered from the torture, and who was the more attached to life because he had seen death so near at hand, it was impossible to indulge in further illusions.

"What do you want me to do?" Christophe rejoined, tranquilly.

"Fire a pistol, bravely, as Stuart did at Minard."

"At whom?"

"At the Duc de Guise."

"A murder?"

"An act of vengeance! Do you forget the hundred gentlemen slaughtered on the same scaffold at

Amboise? A child, little D'Aubigné, said, when he saw that butchery: 'They have beheaded France.'"

"We should receive blows and not strike them, that is the religion of the Gospel," retorted Christophe. "Why reform the Church if we are to imitate the Catholics?"

"Oh! Christophe, they have made you a lawyer, and you are pleading!" said Chaudieu.

"No, my friend," replied the advocate. "But principles are ungrateful things, and you and your followers will be the playthings of the House of Bourbon."

"Oh! Christophe, if you had heard Calvin, you would know that we handle them like gloves! The Bourbons are the gloves, we are the hands."

"Read this!" said Christophe, handing the minister Pibrac's letter.

"Ah! my child, you are ambitious, you can no longer sacrifice yourself! I pity you!"

With those noble words, Chaudieu left the room.

Some days after this scene, the Lallier family and the Lecamus family were assembled, in honor of the betrothal of Christophe and Babette, in the old dark hall, where Christophe no longer slept; for he could go up and down stairs, and was beginning to drag himself along without crutches. It was nine o'clock in the evening, and they were expecting Ambroise Paré. The family notary sat in front of a table covered with contracts. The furrier had sold his house and his business to his first clerk, who was to pay forty thousand livres in cash for the

house, and to pledge it to secure the purchase-money of the stock in trade, on which he was to pay twenty thousand livres on account.

Lecamus had purchased for his son a magnificent stone house built by Philibert de l'Orme, on Rue Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs, and given it to him as his marriage-portion. The syndic also took two hundred and fifty thousand livres from his savings, and Lallier contributed the same amount toward the purchase of a fine seignorial estate in Picardie, the price of which was five hundred thousand livres. The estate in question being held under the crown, letters-patent—called *letters of rescription*—must be procured from the king, and there were also fees for alienation amounting to a considerable sum. The celebration of the marriage was postponed, therefore, until the necessary royal favor should have been granted. Although the bourgeois of Paris had succeeded in obtaining a grant of the right to purchase seignorial estates, the prudence of the Privy Council had surrounded that right with certain restrictions relative to estates held under the crown, and the estate upon which Lecamus had had his eye for ten years past was one of that class. Ambroise had promised faithfully to bring the document that very evening. Old Lecamus went back and forth from the living-room to the door with an impatience which showed how great his ambition really was. At last, Ambroise arrived.

"My old friend," said the surgeon, in an excited tone, glancing at the supper-table, "let me see your

linen. Good. By the way, put in wax-candles. Hurry! hurry! hunt up all the finest things you own."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the curé of Saint-Pierre aux Bœufs.

"The queen-mother and the king are coming to sup with you," replied the surgeon. "They are waiting for an aged counsellor whose seat Christophe may purchase, and for Monsieur de Thou, who concluded the bargain. Do not let it appear that you have been notified; I slipped away from the Louvre."

In an instant, both families were on their feet. Christophe's mother and Babette's aunt bustled about with the activity of housekeepers taken by surprise. Notwithstanding the confusion which that notification caused in the family party, the preparations were made with a celerity bordering on the marvellous. Christophe, bewildered, surprised, confounded by such a mark of favor, was utterly speechless, and stared mechanically while the others worked.

"The king and queen in our house!" said the old mother.

"The queen!" echoed Babette; "what are we to say and do?"

In an hour, everything was transformed, the old hall was decorated, the table fairly gleamed. The sound of horses' hoofs was heard in the streets. The flaring of torches carried by the horsemen of the escort brought all the bourgeois of the neighborhood to their windows. The commotion was soon

over. There remained under the pillars only the queen-mother and her son, King Charles IX.; Charles de Gondi, grand master of the household and governor to the king; Monsieur de Thou, the old counsellor in question, Secretary of State Pinard, and two pages.

"Good people," said the queen, on entering the room, "the king my son and I have come to sign the marriage-contract of our furrier's son; but we do so on the condition that he remains a Catholic. One must be a Catholic to enter Parliament, one must be a Catholic to possess an estate under the crown, one must be a Catholic to sit at the king's table, eh, Pinard?"

The secretary of State appeared with letters-patent in his hand.

"If we are not all Catholics here," said the little king, "Pinard will throw everything into the fire; but we are all Catholics, are we not?" he added, glancing proudly around upon the assemblage.

"Yes, sire," said Christophe Lecamus, bending his knee, albeit with difficulty, and kissing the hand which the young king held out to him.

Queen Catherine, who also gave her hand to Christophe to kiss, suddenly raised him and led him a few steps apart.

"Look you, my fine fellow," she said, "no subterfuges! We are playing an open game!"

"Yes, madame," he replied, dazzled by the handsome reward for his services, and by the honor the grateful queen bestowed upon him.

"Very well, Monsieur Lecamus, the king my son and I give you permission to negotiate for the seat in Parliament of Goodman Groslay here," said the queen. "You will, I trust, follow in the footsteps of the first president."

De Thou stepped forward.

"I will answer for him, madame," he said.

"Very well; draw the papers, notaries," said Pinard.

"Since the king our master does us the honor of signing my daughter's contract," cried Lallier, "I will pay the whole price of the estate."

"The ladies may be seated," said the young king, graciously. "For a wedding-gift to the bride, I will, with my mother's assent, waive my claims."

Old Lecamus and Lallier fell on their knees and kissed the young king's hand.

"*Mordieu!* sire, how much money these bourgeois have!" whispered Gondi in his ear.

The king began to laugh.

"Will their Majesties, being so kindly disposed," said old Lecamus, "deign to permit me to present my successor to them and will they continue to him the royal patent to supply furs to their households?"

"Let us see him," said the king.

Lecamus summoned his successor, who turned deathly pale.

"With my dear mother's permission, we will all take our seats at the supper-table," said the king.

Old Lecamus had the tact to give the king a silver goblet which he had obtained from Benvenuto Cellini

at the time of his residence in Paris at the Hôtel de Nesle, and which had cost him no less than two thousand crowns.

"Oh! mother, what lovely work!" cried the king, raising the goblet by its base.

"That is from Florence," said Catherine.

"Pardon, madame," said Lecamus, "it was made in Paris by a Florentine. Anything from Florence would belong to the queen, but what is made in France is the king's."

"I accept, goodman," said Charles IX., "and after this it shall be my goblet."

"It is beautiful enough," said the queen, after examining the *chef d'œuvre*, "to be included among the crown treasures.—Well, Master Ambroise," she continued in a low tone, addressing the surgeon and pointing to Christophe, "have you taken good care of him? can he walk?"

"He can fly," said the surgeon, with a smile. "Ah! you have seduced him very cleverly."

"The abbey will not go to ruin for lack of one monk," replied the queen, with the levity for which she has been so blamed, but which was only superficial.

The supper was very animated; the queen praised Babette's beauty, and, like the great queen that she always was, she slipped one of her diamonds on her finger, to make up for the loss which the Lecamuses sustained in parting with the goblet. King Charles IX., who subsequently became rather too much addicted to descents of this sort upon his bourgeois

subjects, supped heartily; then, at a word from his new governor, who, it was said, was under instruction to make him forget Cypierre's virtuous precepts, he incited the first president, the old ex-counsellor, the secretary of State, the curé, the notary, and the bourgeois to drink so freely that Queen Catherine took her leave, finding that the hilarity was on the point of becoming uproarious. The instant that the queen rose, Christophe, his father, and the two women took torches and escorted her to the door of the shop. There, Christophe ventured to pull the queen's sleeve and made a significant sign. Catherine stopped, dismissed old Lecamus and the two women with a gesture, and said to Christophe:

"What is it?"

"If the information will be of any benefit to you, madame," he said, speaking close to her ear, "the Duc de Guise is in danger from assassins."

"You are a loyal subject," said Catherine, with a smile, "and I will never forget you."

She held out her hand, famous for its beauty, and removed her glove, which could but be considered a mark of favor; so that Christophe, as he kissed that beautiful hand, became a royalist, heart and soul.

"So they propose to rid me of that swashbuckling soldier, without any assistance from me!" she thought, as she put on her glove.

She mounted her mule, and returned to the Louvre with her two pages.

Christophe's face wore a gloomy expression as he drank with his guests; Ambroise's austere features

reproached him for his apostasy, but subsequent events justified the old syndic. Christophe certainly would not have escaped the Saint-Bartholomew, his wealth and his seignorial estate would have made him a shining mark for the assassins. History has recorded the cruel fate of the wife of Lallier's successor, a beautiful creature whose naked body was left for three days hanging by her hair to one of the piers of Pont au Change. Babette shuddered, thinking that she might have undergone similar treatment had Christophe remained a Calvinist, for such was the name assumed ere long by the reformers. Calvin's ambition was gratified, but not until after his death.

Such was the origin of the celebrated parliamentary family of Lecamus. Tallemant des Réaux is guilty of an error in stating that they came from Picardie. At a later period, the Lecamuses found it to their advantage to describe themselves as of their principal estate, which was situated in that province. Christophe's son, who succeeded him under Louis XIII., was the father of that wealthy President Lecamus who, under Louis XIV., built the magnificent mansion which shared with the Lambert palace the admiration of Parisians and strangers, and which is unquestionably one of the most beautiful structures in Paris. It is still in existence, on Rue de Thorigny, although at the outbreak of the Revolution it was pillaged as belonging to Monsieur de Juigné, then Archbishop of Paris. All the paintings were then destroyed; and the boarding-schools which

have occupied it since have injured it sadly. That palace, built with money made in the old house on Rue de la Pelleterie, still exhibits the grand results formerly produced by the spirit of family. We may be permitted to doubt whether modern individualism, engendered by the equal division of inheritances, will ever rear such monuments.

PART SECOND

THE SECRET OF THE RUGGIERI

*

Between eleven and twelve o'clock one night in the latter part of October, 1573, two Florentines, brothers, Albert de Gondi, Marshal of France, and Charles de Gondi la Tour, grand master of the wardrobe to King Charles IX., were seated on the roof of a house on Rue Saint-Honoré, on the edge of a gutter. It was the ordinary stone gutter which in those days ran along the edge of the roofs to receive the rain-water, and was pierced here and there by long spouts in the shape of impossible animals with wide-open mouths. Despite the zeal with which the present generation is levelling the old houses, there were many of these projecting spouts still in existence in Paris when the recent police ordinance respecting gutters running to the ground caused them all to disappear. Nevertheless, there are a few carved spouts still to be seen, principally in the heart of the Saint-Antoine quarter, where rents are so low that householders cannot afford to build additional stories under the eaves.

It may seem strange that two individuals holding such important offices should thus ply the trade of cats. But to anyone who delves among the historical

treasures of that time, when so many conflicting interests were constantly coming in collision around the throne, that the internal politics of France may fitly be compared to a tangled skein of thread, those two Florentines will seem like veritable cats suitably placed in a gutter. Their devotion to the interests of Queen Catherine de' Medici, who had established them at the French court, forbade them to recoil from any of the consequences of their intrusion. But, to explain how and why the two courtiers had perched themselves there, we must go back to a scene which had taken place within a short distance of this same gutter, in the noble brown hall at the Louvre—the only remaining one of the apartments of Henri II., where the courtiers paid their court after supper to the two queens and the king.

At that time, the bourgeois supped at six o'clock and the nobility at seven; but the most fashionable families supped between eight and nine. That repast corresponded to the dinner of to-day. Some persons erroneously imagine that court etiquette was invented by Louis XIV.; in reality, it was introduced in France by Catherine de' Medici, who made it so strict that the Connétable Anne de Montmorency had more difficulty in obtaining the privilege of entering the courtyard of the Louvre on horseback than in obtaining his constable's sword; indeed, that extraordinary distinction was bestowed upon him only at an advanced age. Somewhat relaxed under the first two kings of the House of Bourbon, etiquette

assumed an Oriental form under the great king, for it came from the Roman Empire, where it was imported from Persia. In 1573, not only had few persons the right to enter the courtyard of the Louvre with servants and torches,—as under Louis XIV. only dukes and peers could drive under the peristyle,—but the offices which carried with them the entrée to the royal apartments after supper could easily be counted. The Maréchal de Retz, now doing sentry duty in that gutter, one day offered a thousand crowns of the money of that time to the usher of the closet for an opportunity to speak to Henri III. at a moment when he had not the right to do it. How laughable it is to a real historian to see a picture of the courtyard of the château of Blois, for instance, in which the artist has placed a gentleman on horseback!

On the occasion to which we refer, then, only the most eminent personages of the realm were present at the Louvre. Queen Elisabeth of Austria and her mother-in-law Catherine de' Medici were seated at the left of the fireplace. On the other side was the king, buried in an easy-chair, affecting a lethargic condition justified by the operation of digestion, for he had eaten like a prince just returned from hunting. Perhaps he wished to avoid speaking in presence of so many persons who were trying to divine his thoughts. The courtiers stood, with uncovered heads, at the end of the hall. Some were talking in undertones; others were watching the king, awaiting a glance or a word from him. The queen-mother

would beckon to one of them and he would talk with her for some moments; another would venture to make a remark to Charles IX., who would answer with a nod of the head or a word or two. A German nobleman, the Count of Solern, stood by the hearth, beside Charles V.'s granddaughter, whom he had accompanied to France. Near the young queen, seated on a stool, was her maid of honor, the Comtesse de Fiesco, a Strozzi and a kinswoman of Catherine. The lovely Madame de Sauves, a descendant of Jacques Cœur, mistress of the King of Navarre, the King of Poland, and the Duc d'Alençon, turn and turn about, had been invited to supper; but she was standing, her husband being only secretary of State. Behind those two ladies stood the two Gondis, talking with them. They alone in all that gloomy assemblage were laughing. Gondi, created Duc de Retz and made gentleman of the chamber, after he had obtained a marshal's baton without ever having commanded an army, had been entrusted with the duty of marrying the queen by proxy at Spires. That favor makes it sufficiently clear that he, like his brother, was of the small number of those whom the two queens and the king allowed to indulge in some familiarities.

On the king's side of the hearth, in the front rank, were the Maréchal de Tavannes, who had come to court on particular business; Neufville de Villeroy, one of the cleverest negotiators of that age, who inaugurated the fortunes of that family; Messieurs Birague and Chiverni, the former, the queen-mother's

confidential adviser, the other, Chancellor of Anjou and Poland, who, knowing the queen-mother's predilection, had attached himself to the service of Henri III., that brother whom Charles IX. regarded as his enemy; Strozzi, the queen-mother's cousin; and several other noblemen, prominent among them the old Cardinal de Lorraine and his nephew, the young Duc de Guise, both of whom were kept at a distance by Catherine and the king alike. Those two leaders of the Holy Alliance, afterward the League, founded some years before in concert with Spain, affected the submission of servants who await the opportunity to become masters. Catherine and Charles IX. watched each other with equal attention.

In that court, which was itself as gloomy as the apartment in which it was held, everyone had his reasons for being melancholy or thoughtful. The young queen was a victim of the tortures of jealousy, and disguised them poorly by pretending to smile upon her husband, whom, like a virtuous and affectionate wife, she passionately adored.—Marie Touchet, Charles IX.'s only mistress, to whom he was chivalrously faithful, had returned more than a month before from the château of Fayet, in Dauphiné, where she had gone to lie in. She brought back to Charles IX. the only son he ever had, Charles de Valois, at first Comte d'Auvergne, afterward Duc d'Angoulême. In addition to the chagrin of knowing that her rival had given the king a son, while she had had a daughter only, the poor

queen had experienced the humiliation of a sudden desertion. During his mistress's absence, the king had returned to his wife with an excessive passion which history mentions as one of the causes of his death. But Marie Touchet's return proved to the devout Austrian how little part the heart had played in her husband's love. Nor was this the only disillusion which the young queen suffered in this matter; hitherto Catherine de' Medici had seemed friendly to her; but now, as a matter of policy, she encouraged her son's infidelity, preferring to serve the king's mistress rather than his wife. For this reason.

When Charles IX. avowed his passion for Marie Touchet, Catherine manifested a favorable disposition to the girl, in the interest of her own domination. Marie Touchet, who had been launched at court very young, came thither at that period of life when noble sentiments are in full bloom; she adored the king for his own sake. Terrified at the fate to which ambition had brought the Duchesse de Valentinois, better known under the name of Diane de Poitiers, she was doubtless afraid of Catherine de' Medici, and preferred happiness to splendor. Perhaps she reflected that two lovers as young as the king and herself could not hope to contend with the queen-mother. Marie was the only daughter of Jean Touchet, Sieur de Beauvais and du Quillard, king's councillor and lieutenant of the *bailliage* of Orléans; thus she occupied a station between the bourgeois and the lowest nobility, and was neither

altogether bourgeois nor altogether noble; therefore she was not likely to be inspired by the inborn ambition of the Pisseleus and the Saint-Valliers, maidens of illustrious origin who fought for their families with the secret weapons of love. Marie Touchet, alone and without family connections, spared Catherine de' Medici the annoyance of finding in her son's mistress the daughter of some great family, who would have set herself up as her rival. Jean Touchet, one of the finest minds of his day, to whom several poets dedicated their works, would accept nothing at court. Marie, being a young woman without hangers-on, as clever and well-informed as she was simple-mannered and artless, and one whose wishes were certain not to be injurious to the royal power, proved very acceptable to Catherine, who gave evidence of the greatest affection for her. Indeed, she obtained from the Parliament a decree recognizing the legitimacy of the son Marie Touchet had borne in April, and permitted him to assume the title of Comte d'Auvergne, assuring Charles IX. that she would bequeath him by will *her own domains*, the comtés of Auvergne and Lauraguais. Marguerite, at first Queen of Navarre, contested this bequest when she became Queen of France, and the Parliament annulled it; but, later still, Louis XIII., moved thereto by respect for the blood of the Valois, indemnified the Comte d'Auvergne with the duchy of Angoulême. Catherine had already given to Marie Touchet, who asked for nothing, the seignorial estate of Belleville,

an estate with no title attached, near Vincennes, whither the mistress was accustomed to go when the king, after hunting, lay at the château of Vincennes. Charles IX. passed the greater part of his last days in that frowning fortress, and, according to some authors, breathed his last there as Louis XII. had done.

Although it was very natural for a lover so seriously enamored to lavish upon the adored one constant proofs of love, at a time when he should have been expiating his infidelity to his lawful spouse, Catherine, after driving her son into the queen's bed, pleaded Marie Touchet's cause as women know how to plead, and had just driven the king back into his mistress's arms. Anything that kept Charles IX. interested outside of politics was welcome to Catherine; but the kindly disposition she displayed toward this girl momentarily deceived Charles IX., who was beginning to look upon her as an enemy. The motives which governed Catherine's conduct in this affair escaped the comprehension of Queen Elisabeth, who, according to Brantôme, was one of the greatest queens who ever reigned, and who never injured or offended anyone, *even reading her book of hours in secret.* But that innocent princess was beginning to catch glimpses of the precipices that yawn about a throne: a horrible discovery which might well cause an occasional attack of vertigo; indeed, she must have experienced something even worse than vertigo to induce her to reply to one of her ladies, who said to her, after the king's

death, that, if she had a son, she would be queen-mother and regent.

"Ah! let us thank God that he never gave me a son! What would have happened? the poor child would have been robbed as they tried to rob the king my husband, and I should have been the cause of it. God took pity on the State, He did everything for the best."

This princess, whose portrait Brantôme flattered himself that he had painted by saying that her complexion was as delicate and beautiful as those of the ladies of her court, and very pleasant to behold, and that her figure was fine although she was rather short, was of small consequence at court; but as her husband's frame of mind enabled her to abandon herself to her twofold grief, her attitude intensified the gloom of a picture which a young queen less cruelly afflicted than she might have brightened. The pious Elisabeth proved at that moment that the qualities which are the glory of women of ordinary rank may be fatal to a sovereign. A princess who turned her attention to something beside her book of hours during the night might have been a useful helpmeet to Charles IX., who found no sustaining force either in his wife or in his mistress.

As for the queen-mother, her attention was centred on the king, who, during the supper, had manifested a noisy good-humor, which she well knew to be assumed as a cloak for some step to be taken adverse to her. That sudden gayety contrasted too noticeably with the perturbation of mind which he

had concealed with difficulty by his assiduity in the hunting-field, and by working like a madman at the forge, where he loved to hammer iron, for Catherine to be deceived by it. Although she could not guess what statesman was lending his aid in the negotiations and preliminaries,—for Charles IX. had a way of throwing his mother's spies off the scent,—Catherine had no doubt that some scheme was being concocted against her. The unlooked-for presence of Tavannes, who had arrived at the same time as Strozzi, for whom she had written, gave her much food for thought. By virtue of the strength of her combinations, Catherine was above ordinary circumstances; but she was powerless against sudden violence.

As many persons know nothing of the condition of public affairs of that time, complicated as they were by the numerous different parties which kept France in a state of agitation, and whose leaders were all guided by their private interests, it is necessary to describe, in a few words, the perilous crisis by which the queen-mother was threatened. And at the same time that we display Catherine de' Medici in a new light, we shall go to the root of this episode.

Two words furnish the key to the character of that woman, who is such an interesting subject of study, and whose influence left such a deep impression upon France. Those two words are power and astrology. Being exclusively ambitious, Catherine had no other passion than the passion for power. Superstitious and a fatalist, as so many superior men were, she

believed sincerely in nothing but the occult sciences. Without a knowledge of these two facts, her character will never be understood. By giving precedence to her faith in astrology, we shall turn the light upon the two philosophical personages of this Study.

There was one man to whom Catherine was more attached than to her children: that man was Cosmo Ruggieri; she provided him with apartments at her Hôtel de Soissons, she had made him her final adviser, whose duty it was to tell her whether the stars confirmed the opinions and good sense of her ordinary advisers. Ruggieri's peculiar antecedents justified the influence over his mistress which he retained to the last moment. Unquestionably the physician of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, Catherine's father, was one of the most learned men of the sixteenth century. That physician was called Old Ruggiero—*Vecchio Ruggier* and *Roger l'Ancien* by the French authors who have treated of alchemy—to distinguish him from his two sons, Lorenzo Ruggiero, called *the Great* by cabalistic authors, and Cosmo Ruggiero, Catherine's astrologer, also called Roger by some historians. It has been customary to call them Ruggieri, just as Catherine's name is commonly called Médicis instead of Médici. Old Ruggieri was so highly esteemed in the House of Medici, that the two dukes, Cosmo and Lorenzo, were the godfathers of his two sons. In concert with the famous mathematician Bazile, he cast Catherine's horoscope, in his capacity of mathematician, astrologer, and physician to the House of

Medici, three offices whose functions are often confounded. In those days, the occult sciences were cultivated with ardor well calculated to surprise the incredulous minds of our own sovereignly analytical age; perhaps they may detect in this historical sketch the germ of the positive sciences, widely studied in the nineteenth century, but without the poetic grandeur which was ascribed to them by the audacious investigators of the sixteenth century; who, instead of devoting their energy to industry, magnified art and made thought fruitful. The patronage universally accorded to art by the sovereigns of that time was justified, too, by the marvellous creations of inventors who started in quest of the philosopher's stone and reached amazing results. Never were sovereigns more eager in their pursuit of these mysteries. The Fuggers, whom modern Luculluses acknowledge as their princes, and modern bankers as their masters, were certainly shrewd calculators, not easily surprised; well, those hard-headed men, who lent the funds of all Europe to the rulers of the sixteenth century, who were debt-ridden as well as those of the present day,—those illustrious hosts of Charles V. had an interest in Paracelsus's retorts. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Old Ruggieri was at the head of that secret university from which the Cardans graduated, and the Nostradamuses and the Agrippas, who were in turn physicians to the Valois princes, —in a word, all the astronomers, astrologers, alchemists who surrounded the princes of Christendom

in those days, and who were more especially welcomed and patronized in France by Catherine de' Medici.

In the horoscope cast by Bazile and Old Ruggieri, the principal events of Catherine's life were predicted with an accuracy most disheartening to those who deny the power of the occult sciences. That horoscope foretold the disasters which marked her early years, during the siege of Florence, her marriage to a son of France, the unhoped-for accession of that son to the throne, the birth of her children and their number. Three of her sons in succession were to be kings, two daughters were to be queens, and all were to die without posterity. The predictions were fulfilled so exactly, that many historians have believed that they were made after the facts.

Everyone knows that Nostradamus produced at the Château of Chaumont, when Catherine went thither at the time of La Renaudie's conspiracy, a woman who possessed the gift of reading the future. And, during the reign of François II., when the queen's four sons were all young and in good health, before the marriage of Elizabeth de Valois to Philip II., King of Spain, before the marriage of Marguerite de Valois to Henri de Bourbon, King of Navarre, Nostradamus and his friend confirmed the predictions of the famous horoscope. That female, who doubtless was endowed with second-sight, and who belonged to the great school of indefatigable seekers after the philosopher's stone, but

whose private life has escaped the researches of historians, declared that the last of the sons to wear a crown would die by the hand of an assassin. After placing the queen in front of a magic mirror, wherein was reflected a wheel, with the face of one of her children on each spoke, the sorceress set the wheel in motion, and the queen counted the number of revolutions it made. Each revolution represented one year's reign for each child. When Henri IV. was placed on the wheel, it made twenty-two revolutions. The woman—some authors say it was a man—informed the horrified queen that Henri de Bourbon would actually become King of France and would reign that number of years. Thereupon Queen Catherine swore a deadly hatred to the Béarnais, learning that he was destined to succeed the last of the Valois upon his assassination. Being curious to learn what manner of death her own would be, she was told to beware of Saint-Germain. From that day, believing that she was likely to be imprisoned or put to death at the château of Saint-Germain, she never set foot within its doors, although it was far more convenient for the execution of her designs, because of its nearness to Paris, than all those where she and the king sought shelter during the civil disturbances. When she fell sick a few days after the murder of the Duc de Guise, during the session of the States-General at Blois, she asked the name of the prelate who attended her, and was told that it was Saint-Germain.

"I am a dead woman!" she cried.

She died the next day, having lived the full number of years that all her horoscopes allotted her.

These prophecies, which were known to the Cardinal de Lorraine, who called them witchcraft, were now being fulfilled. François II. had reigned only his two turns of the wheel, and Charles IX. was making his last turn. The strange words which Catherine said to her son Henri on his departure for Poland: "You will soon return!" must be attributed to her faith in the occult sciences, and not to a purpose to poison Charles IX. Marguerite of France was Queen of Navarre, Elisabeth was Queen of Spain, the Duc d'Anjou was King of Poland.

Many other circumstances tended to confirm Catherine's faith in the occult sciences. During the night before the jousting in which Henri II. was fatally wounded, Catherine saw the fatal blow in a dream. Her astrological council, consisting of Nostradamus and the two Ruggieri, had predicted the king's death. History has recorded Catherine's prayer to Henri II. not to enter the lists. The prognostication and the dream produced by it were realized. The memoirs of the time report another incident no less strange. The courier who announced the victory of Moncontour arrived at night, after making the journey so swiftly that he had killed three horses. The queen-mother was awakened to hear the news, and said: "I know it."—According to Brantôme, she had actually described her son's triumph and some details of the battle, on the preceding day. The astrologer of the House of Bourbon declared that Antoine de

Bourbon's son, the scion of so many princes descended from Saint-Louis, would be King of France. That prediction, reported by Sully, was fulfilled according to the precise terms of the horoscope, which fact caused Henri IV. to remark that by dint of much lying those people sometimes stumbled on the truth. However that may be, if it be true that the majority of the most sagacious men of that period believed in the far-reaching science called *Magism* by the masters of the science of astrology, and *Witchcraft* by the public at large, they were justified in that belief by the successful casting of horoscopes.

It was for Cosmo Ruggieri, her mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, sorcerer, if you choose, that Catherine built the column now standing against the wall of the wheat market, the last remnant of the Hôtel de Soissons. Cosmo Ruggieri possessed the same mysterious influence that a confessor possesses, and with it, like a confessor, he was content. He cherished, moreover, an ambitious aspiration superior to ordinary ambition. That man, whom novelists and dramatists represent as a mountebank, owned the rich abbey of Saint-Mahé, in Lower Bretagne, and had declined exalted ecclesiastical dignities; the money which the superstitious passions of the time brought to him in abundance sufficed for his secret enterprises, and the queen's hand, extended over his head, protected his every hair from harm.

As for the thirst for power by which Catherine

was devoured, her craving for it was so great that, in order to seize it, she formed an alliance with the Guises, the enemies of the throne; and, to keep the reins of State in her hands, she resorted to every means, freely sacrificing her friends and even her children. That woman could live only by political intrigue, as a gambler lives only by the excitement of play. Although she was an Italian, of the licentious race of the Medici, even the Calvinists, who slandered her so savagely, could never discover that she had a lover. Admiring the maxim: *Divide to reign*, she had learned twelve years before to keep one force constantly contending with another. As soon as she took the reins of public affairs in her hands, she was forced to kindle discord between two rival families in order to neutralize their forces and save the crown. That necessary course of conduct justifies the prediction of Henri II. Catherine invented that game of political seesaw which has been imitated since by all princes who have found themselves in a position analogous to hers, now pitting Calvinists against Guises, now pitting Guises against Calvinists. After setting the two religions to struggle with each other in the hearts of the people, Catherine set up the Duc d'Anjou against Charles IX. After making use of things, she made use of men, retaining the threads of all their selfish interests in her own hands. But at that terrible game, which requires the head of a Louis XI. or a Louis XVIII., one inevitably incurs the hatred of all parties and finds one's self under the necessity of conquering

always, for the loss of a single battle makes every selfish interest an enemy; unless, indeed, by dint of triumphing again and again, you end by finding that there are no more players.

The greater part of the reign of Charles IX. was the triumph of the domestic policy of that extraordinary woman. How much adroitness Catherine was obliged to display to obtain the command of the army for the Duc d'Anjou, under a gallant young king, thirsty for renown, capable and noble-hearted, and in the lifetime of Connétable Anne de Montmorency! In the eyes of the statesmen of Europe, the Duc d'Anjou reaped all the honor of the Saint-Bartholomew, while Charles IX. incurred all the odium therefor. After arousing in the king's mind a secret, causeless jealousy of his brother, she made use of that passion to wear out the great qualities Charles IX. really possessed in the intrigues of a rivalry between brothers. Cypierre, the king's first governor, and Amyot, his tutor, had made their pupil so great a man, they had paved the way for so noble a reign, that the mother hated her son from the first day when she was conscious of a fear of losing the power which she had so laboriously acquired. From these facts, most historians have evolved the theory of a predilection on the queen-mother's part for Henri III.; but her conduct at the time of which we write demonstrates the absolute insensibility of her heart toward her children. By accepting the throne of Poland, the Duc d'Anjou deprived her of the instrument she needed to keep the

king engrossed by those domestic intrigues which up to that time had neutralized his energy by affording pasturage for his violent passions. Thereupon Catherine invented the conspiracy of La Mole and Coconnas, in which a hand was taken by the Duc d'Alençon, who, when he became Duc d'Anjou by his brother's accession to the throne, very obligingly fell in with his mother's views, exhibiting an ambitious spirit which was encouraged by his sister Marguerite, Queen of Navarre. This conspiracy, which had now reached the point to which Catherine wished to bring it, had for its object the placing the young duke and his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, at the head of the Calvinists, seizing upon Charles IX. and holding as a prisoner that heirless king,—thus leaving the throne to the duke, whose purpose was to establish Calvinism in France. Calvin had obtained, a few days before his death, the reward to which he had looked forward so long and so eagerly, when the Reformation adopted the designation *Calvinism* in his honor.

If Le Laboureur and the most careful authors had not already proved that La Mole and Coconnas—who were arrested seven weeks after the night on which this narrative begins, and beheaded in the month of April following—were the victims of the queen-mother's political scheming, Cosmo Ruggieri's participation in the affair would be sufficient to make one reasonably certain that she secretly directed their undertaking. That man, of whom the king entertained suspicions and against whom he cherished

a bitter hatred, the reasons for which will be sufficently explained hereafter, was implicated in the criminal proceedings. He admitted that he had furnished La Mole with a figure representing the king, pierced to the heart by two needles. That form of sorcery — *envoûter* — constituted, in those days, a capital crime. The word envoûter expresses one of the most fascinating, infernal images that hatred can conjure up; moreover, it depicts admirably the magnetic, terrible working, in the unseen world, of a constant desire encompassing the person thus doomed to death, its effects being constantly brought to mind by the wax figure. The law in those days held, and justly, that a thought to which bodily form was given constituted the crime of lèse-majesté. Charles IX. demanded the Florentine's death; Catherine, who was more powerful, prevailed upon the Parliament, through Counsellor Lecamus, to sentence her astrologer to the galleys only. After the king's death, Cosmo Ruggieri was pardoned by order of Henri III., who restored his pensions and received him at court.

Catherine had dealt so many blows at her son's heart that he was at that moment impatient to shake off his mother's yoke. During Marie Touchet's absence, Charles, having nothing to occupy his mind, had devoted himself to watching the progress of affairs about him. He had very craftily laid snares for people upon whom he thought that he could depend, in order to test their loyalty. He had watched his mother's manœuvres and had concealed his own

from her, making use of all the faults she had sown in him to deceive her. Consumed with the desire to wipe out the horror caused in France by the Saint Bartholomew, he turned his attention energetically to public business, presided over the council, and tried to grasp the reins of government by a skilfully devised course of conduct. Although the queen had tried to combat her son's inclination by employing all the means of influence over his mind which her maternal authority and her habit of domination gave her, the downward slope of suspicion was so steep that the son at the first impulse went too far to return. On the day when the words his mother had said to the King of Poland were reported to him, Charles IX. was feeling in such a wretched state of health that he conceived horrible suspicions, and when such suspicions invade the heart of a son and a king, nothing can expel them. In fact, on his deathbed, his mother was obliged to interrupt him, crying: "Do not say that, monsieur!" when, as he commended his wife and daughter to the care of Henri IV., he attempted to put him on his guard against Catherine. Although Charles IX. showed no lack of that external respect, of which the queen-mother was always so tenacious that she always called the kings her sons "Monsieur," she had noticed in her son's manners for several months past the ill-disguised irony of one who had determined to be revenged. But to deceive Catherine, a man must have been very clever. She held in readiness the conspiracy of the Duc d'Alençon and La Mole, in order

to turn aside, by representing another brother as a rival, the efforts Charles IX. was making to effect his emancipation; but, before making use of it, she wished to banish suspicions which might make any reconciliation between herself and her son impossible; for would he leave the royal power in the hands of a mother whom he believed to be capable of poisoning him? Indeed, she considered that her position was so seriously threatened at that moment, that she had summoned her kinsman, Strozzi, a soldier noted for his prompt execution of orders. She held secret councils with Birague and the two Gondis, and never before had she consulted her oracle at the Hôtel de Soissons so frequently.

Although lapse of time, as well as the habit of dissimulation, had given Catherine that abbess's face, haughty and macerated, of the whiteness of wax yet full of subtlety, inscrutable yet searching,—a remarkable face in the eyes of all who have studied her portrait,—the courtiers detected some clouded spots upon that Florentine ice. No sovereign was ever more imposing than that woman had been since the day when she succeeded in putting down the Guises after the death of François II. Her black velvet cap cut in a point over the forehead—she never ceased to wear mourning for Henri II.—made a sort of feminine cowl around her cold, commanding face, to which, however, she could impart on occasion true Italian seductiveness. She was so well made that she introduced the fashion among women of riding so as to show the legs; it is not necessary

to say that hers were the most shapely legs imaginable. All women rode *à la planchette* throughout Europe, which had long followed the lead of France in matters of fashion. To him who can form a mental picture of that noble figure, the scene in the great hall at the time of which we write will assume an aspect of grandeur. The two queens, so unlike in character, in beauty, in costume, and almost at daggers drawn,—one ingenuous and pensive, the other pensive and solemn as an abstract idea,—were both too much absorbed to give during that evening the word of command which the courtiers were awaiting to become animated.

The drama, hidden far below the surface, which the mother and son had been playing for six months, had been detected by some courtiers; but the Italians, especially, had followed it with a watchful eye, for all of them were certain to be sacrificed if Catherine should lose the game. Under such circumstances, and at a time when mother and son were trying to outwit each other, the king was the object of especial attention. On the evening in question, Charles IX., tired out by a long day's hunting and by the necessity of concealing his serious preoccupation, seemed to be forty years old. He had reached the last stage of the disease of which he died and which justified some sober-minded persons in thinking that he was poisoned. According to De Thou, the Tacitus of the Valois kings, the surgeons found suspicious discolorations in Charles IX.'s body—*ex causa incognita reperti livores*. The obsequies of that prince were

even more neglected than those of François II. Charles IX. was escorted from Saint-Lazare to Saint-Denis by Brantôme and a few archers of the guard commanded by the Count of Solern. That circumstance, taken in conjunction with the mother's supposed hatred of her son, tends to confirm the charge made by De Thou; but it certainly justifies the opinion expressed in these pages as to Catherine's lack of affection for all her children; an insensibility which is explained by her faith in the decrees of astrology. She could hardly feel any deep interest in instruments which were soon to be taken from her. Henri III. was the last king under whom she was to reign, that was all. We may be permitted to-day to believe that Charles IX. died a natural death. His excesses, his mode of life, the sudden development of his faculties, his last efforts to seize the reins of power, his longing to live, his abuse of his physical forces, his last sufferings and his last pleasures, all tend to convince unbiased minds that he died of consumption, a disease then little known and not carefully studied, whose symptoms might have led Charles IX. himself to believe that he was poisoned. But the real poison that his mother administered to him lay in the deplorable advice of the courtiers who were stationed about him to make him squander his physical as well as his intellectual strength, and who thus brought about his purely accidental and not constitutional malady.

At that time, more than at any other in his life, Charles IX. displayed a gloomy majesty which is

not unbecoming to kings. The grandeur of his secret thoughts was reflected on his face, which was noticeable by reason of the Italian complexion inherited from his mother. That ivory-like pallor, so beautiful by artificial light, so well adapted to the expression of melancholy, gave undue brilliancy to the fire of his blue-black eyes, which, being confined between thick eyelids, acquired thereby the acute, sagacious expression which the imagination demands in a kingly glance; their color was favorable to dissimulation. Charles IX.'s eyes were made especially imposing by the position of the raised eyebrows, in harmony with the broad forehead which he could raise and lower at will. He had a broad, long nose, thick at the end, a veritable lion's nose; large ears, auburn hair, a mouth which seemed almost to be bleeding, like those of most consumptives, the upper lip thin and sneering, the lower heavy enough to lead one to infer that he possessed the noblest qualities of heart. The deep wrinkles on that brow, whose youthful purity had been marred by terrible anxieties, aroused intense interest; the remorse caused by the utter uselessness of the Saint Bartholomew, a measure which was cunningly extorted from him, had caused more than one of them; but there were two others on his face which would have been very eloquent to a scholar endowed with a special genius which enabled him to divine the elements of modern physiology. Those two wrinkles produced a sharply defined furrow from each cheek-bone to the corner of the mouth, and betrayed

the inward struggles of an organism worn out in supplying nourishment for the labors of the mind and for the violent pleasures of the body. Charles IX. was exhausted. The queen-mother, upon viewing her work, must have suffered from remorse, if indeed the necessities of politics do not stifle that sentiment in all persons clothed in the purple. If Catherine had realized the effect of her intrigues upon her son, would she, perchance, have held her hand? What a ghastly spectacle! That king, born so strong and healthy, had become feeble, that admirably tempered mind was full of doubts; that man, in whom all power resided, felt that he was without support; that firm character had little confidence in itself. Warlike valor had changed by degrees to ferocity, discretion to dissimulation; the dainty, refined love of the Valois to an insatiable frantic craving for pleasure. That great man, misunderstood, perverted, worn smooth on all the facets of his noble soul, a king without power, having a generous heart but not a friend, driven hither and thither by a thousand opposing plans, presented the melancholy spectacle of a man of twenty-four who had lost all his illusions, was suspicious of everything, and had determined to stake everything, even his life. Within a short time, he had awakened to a realizing sense of his mission, his power, his resources, and the obstacles which his mother placed in the way of the pacification of the kingdom; but that newly-acquired light shone in a broken lantern.

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Two men whom this prince loved so well that he had excepted one of them from the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, and had gone to dine with the other at the time when his enemies accused him of having given poison to the king,—his first surgeon Ambroise Paré and his first physician Jean Chapelain,—had come from the provinces in hot haste at a summons from Catherine, and had arrived at the Louvre in time for the king's retiring. Both were watching their master anxiously, and some courtiers questioned them in undertones; but the two learned men measured their replies, concealing the death-sentence which they had mentally pronounced. From time to time the king raised his heavy eyelids and tried to hide from the courtiers the glance he cast at his mother. Suddenly he rose and stood in front of the fireplace.

"Monsieur de Chiverni," he said, "why do you retain the title of Chancellor of Anjou and Poland? Are you in our service or our brother's?"

"I am entirely at your service, sire," replied Chiverni, bowing low.

"In that case, come to-morrow; I have it in mind to send you to Spain, for strange things are happening at the court of Madrid, messieurs."

The king glanced at his wife and threw himself back into his chair.

"Strange things are happening everywhere," he said, in an undertone, to the Maréchal de Tavannes, one of the favorite friends of his youth.

He rose again and led the companion of his youthful amusements into the embrasure of the window at the corner of the room, and said to him:

"I have need of you, stay until the last. I wish to ascertain whether you will be for me or against me. Do not look surprised. I am breaking my leash. My mother is the cause of all the evil here. Three months hence I shall either be dead, or king in fact as well as in name. Silence, on your life! You have my secret, you and Solern and Villeroy. If it becomes known, it will be through one of you three. Do not keep so close to me, go and pay court to my mother, tell her that I am dying and that you do not regret it, because I am a poor creature."

Charles IX. walked back and forth with his hand resting on his former favorite's shoulder, ostensibly talking to him about his aches and pains, to mislead the curious onlookers; then, fearing that his coldness might be too apparent, he went to talk with the two queens, calling to Birague to join them. At that moment, Pinard, one of the secretaries of State, glided like an eel along the wall from the door to Catherine's chair. He whispered a word or two in the queen-mother's ear, to which she replied with a nod. The king did not ask his mother what they had said to each other, but returned to his chair and said nothing, after casting a glance of withering

anger and jealousy upon the whole court. That little incident was of the utmost moment in the eyes of all. It was like the drop of water which makes the glass overflow—that cool exercise of authority by the queen-mother without reference to the king. Queen Elisabeth and the Comtesse de Fiesco withdrew, unnoticed by the king; but the queen-mother accompanied her daughter-in-law to the door. Although the evident falling-out between the mother and the son imparted the very greatest interest to the movements, the glances, and the attitudes of both, their cold demeanor gave the courtiers to understand that they were in the way; they left the hall when the young queen had gone. At ten o'clock, there remained only a few intimate friends,—the two Gondis, Tavannes, the Count of Solern, Birague, and the queen-mother.

The king remained buried in the blackest melancholy. The silence was most tedious. Catherine seemed embarrassed, she wished to retire, she wished that the king should escort her from the room; but the king remained absorbed in his reverie; she rose to bid him good-night, Charles IX. was compelled to follow her example; she took his arm and walked a few steps with him so that she could put her lips to his ear and whisper:

"Monsieur, I have some important matters to discuss with you."

Before leaving the room, the queen-mother glanced into a mirror and bestowed upon the two Gondis a wink which escaped the king's notice as he was at

the same moment glancing significantly at the Count of Solern and Villeroy. Tavannes was lost in thought.

"Sire," said the Maréchal de Retz, emerging from his meditation, "it seems to me that you are royally bored; pray, do you never amuse yourself now? *Vive-Dieu!* where are the times when we used to divert ourselves by wandering around the streets at night like vagabonds?"

"Ah! those were the good old times," the king replied, not without a sigh.

"Why do you not go?" said Birague, with a glance at the Gondis.

"I always remember those days with great pleasure," cried the Maréchal de Retz.

"I would like right well to see you on the roofs, Monsieur le Maréchal," said Tavannes. "May you break your neck, damned Italian cat!" he added in the king's ear.

"I cannot say whether you or I would cross a courtyard or a street the faster; but what I do know is that neither of us is more afraid of death than the other," replied the Duc de Retz.

"Well, sire, do you feel like playing the vagabond as in your youth?" said the grand master of the wardrobe.

It will be seen that, at twenty-four, the unhappy king no longer seemed young to anybody, even to his flatterers. Tavannes and he recalled, like schoolboys, some of the amusing capers they had cut in Paris, and the excursion was speedily arranged.

The two Italians, being challenged to leap from roof to roof, and from one side of the street to the other, offered to wager that they would follow the king. They separated to assume the costume of vagabonds. The Count of Solern, remaining alone with the king, gazed at him in amazement. Although the worthy German, whose compassion had been aroused when he discovered the king's position, was the soul of loyalty and honor, he lacked quickness of perception. Surrounded by people who were hostile to him, unable to trust anybody, even his wife, —who had been guilty of some indiscretions, not knowing that his mother and her servants were his enemies,—Charles IX. had been fortunate enough to find in the Count of Solern a whole-souled devotion which warranted perfect confidence. Tavannes and Villeroy knew only a portion of the king's secrets. The Count of Solern alone knew the whole plan; he was, moreover, especially useful to his master in that he had at his disposal a number of trustworthy and attached retainers who obeyed his orders blindly. The count, who held a commission in the archers of the guard, had been engaged for some time in sifting out men who were devotedly attached to the king to form a picked company. The king thought of everything.

"Well, Solern," said Charles, "do we not need an excuse for passing the night out-of-doors? I had Madame de Belleville for a pretext, to be sure; but this is much better, for my mother may find out what happened at Marie's."

Solern, who was to accompany the king, asked permission to beat up the streets with some of his Germans, and Charles consented. About eleven o'clock, the king, who had become very gay, started out with his three courtiers to explore the Saint-Honoré quarter.

"I will go and surprise my love," said Charles to Tavannes, turning into Rue de l'Autruche.

To make this night scene more intelligible to those persons who have not the topography of old Paris in their minds, it is necessary to explain where Rue de l'Autruche was. The construction of the Louvre of Henri II. was being continued amid houses and heaps of ruins. On the site of the wing which to-day faces the Pont des Arts there was a garden. In the place where the colonnade now stands, there were moats and a drawbridge, upon which a Florentine, the Maréchal d'Ancre, was one day to be assassinated. At the end of the garden rose the towers of the Hôtel de Bourbon, the residence of the princes of that house down to the day when the treachery of the great Connétable de Bourbon, ruined by the sequestration of his property which François I. ordered, to avoid pronouncing judgment as between his—François's—mother and the constable, terminated that lawsuit so fatal to France by the confiscation of his whole estate. That mansion, which produced an imposing effect on the bank of the river, was not demolished until the days of Louis XIV. Rue de l'Autruche began at Rue Saint-Honoré and ended at the Hôtel de Bourbon on the

quay. It was called Rue d'Autriche on some old plans, Rue de l'Austruc on others, but has now disappeared from the map like so many others. Rue des Poulies is probably laid out on the site of the houses toward the Rue Saint-Honoré end. The authorities are not agreed as to the etymology of the name. Some suppose that it comes from a Hôtel d'Osteriche—*Osterrichen*—occupied by a daughter of that family who married a French nobleman in the fourteenth century. Others claim that the royal aviaries used to be on that street, and that all Paris flocked thither at one time to see a live ostrich—*autruche*. Be that as it may, that crooked street was notable by reason of the mansions of several princes of the blood who lived in the neighborhood of the Louvre. Since royalty had deserted Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where it sheltered itself under the walls of the Bastille for two centuries, to take up its abode at the Louvre, many great noblemen had established themselves in the neighborhood. Now, at the Rue Saint-Honoré end of the Rue de l'Autruche, corresponding to the Hôtel de Bourbon on the quay, was the old Hôtel d'Alençon. That residence of the counts of that name, which was always included in the appanage of the title, belonged at this time to the fourth son of Henri II., who subsequently assumed the title of Duc d'Anjou, and who died under Henri III., whom he caused a deal of trouble. The appanage thereupon reverted to the crown, including the old mansion, which was torn down. In those days, a prince's palace included a vast number of buildings;

to form an idea of their extent, one should measure the space covered by the Hôtel Soubise in the Marais, to-day. A *hôtel* included all the appurtenances demanded by those magnificent existences which may well appear problematical to many persons who see the paltry condition of a prince of to-day. There were enormous stables, quarters for physicians, librarians, chancellors, clergy, treasurers, officers of the household, pages, paid retainers, and valets attached to the prince's service. Near Rue Saint-Honoré, in a garden of the mansion, was a pretty little house which the famous Duchesse d'Alençon built in 1520, and which had afterward been surrounded by private houses built by tradesmen. There the king had installed Marie Touchet. Although the Duc d'Alençon was conspiring against his brother, he was incapable of thwarting him on that point.

As it was necessary to pass his loved one's house, in order to descend Rue Saint-Honoré, which in those days offered no opportunity for footpads except beyond the Barrière des Sergents, it would have been hard for the king not to stop there. In quest of adventures, looking for some belated bourgeois to pillage or a patrol to fight, he looked up at all the windows, and closely scrutinized those in which there were lights, to see what was going on or to listen to conversations. But he found his good city in a deplorable state of tranquillity. Suddenly, as they were passing the house of a famous perfumer named René, who supplied the court, the king

seemed to conceive one of those sudden inspirations which are suggested by previous observations, as he noticed a bright light in the last window under the eaves.

This perfumer was strongly suspected of curing rich uncles when they claimed to be ill; the court ascribed to him the invention of the famous *Elixir of Inheritances*, and he was accused of having poisoned Jeanne d'Albret, mother of Henri IV., who was buried without her head having been opened, *despite the formal order of Charles IX.*, says a contemporary. For two months past, the king had been trying to invent some stratagem whereby he could pry into the secrets of René's laboratory, which Cosmo Ruggieri often visited. The king proposed, if he should find anything suspicious, to proceed personally in the matter without the intervention of police or law officers, upon whom his mother would act by fear or bribery.

It is certain that, during the sixteenth century, and in the years immediately preceding and following it, poisoning had attained a degree of perfection unknown to modern chemistry, as history has recorded. Italy, the cradle of modern science, was at that period the inventor and mistress of these secret processes, many of which are lost. Thence the unsavory reputation which Italians bore for the two following centuries. Novelists have overworked it to such a degree that they never introduce Italians who do not play the part of assassins and poisoners. If Italy then monopolized the traffic in subtle poisons

of which some historians speak, we must simply recognize her supremacy in toxicology as in all branches of human knowledge and in the arts, in which she led the way for all Europe. The crimes of the period were not hers, she served the passions of the age just as she built splendid edifices, commanded armies, painted beautiful frescoes, sang songs, loved queens, made herself attractive to kings, planned festivals or ballets, and guided policies. At Florence, that ghastly art had attained such perfection that a woman dividing a peach with a duke, using a knife with a golden blade, of which only one side had been poisoned, ate the unpoisoned half and dealt out death with the other. A pair of scented gloves instilled a fatal disease through the pores. Poison was placed in a bouquet of natural roses, of which the mere perfume, inhaled once, would cause death. Don John of Austria is said to have been poisoned by a pair of boots.

Thus King Charles IX. was justifiably curious, and the reader will easily imagine that the sombre suspicions which filled his mind made him impatient to surprise René at work.

The old fountain, situated at the corner of Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, since rebuilt, afforded the noble band the means of reaching the roof of a house adjoining René's, whom the king pretended that he intended to visit. Followed by his companions, he began to climb along the roofs to the dire alarm of divers worthy bourgeois awakened by these pretended robbers, who called them absurd names, listened to the

quarrels and diversions of each household, and in some cases began to force an entrance. When the Italians saw Tavannes and the king step on the roof of the house adjoining René's, the Maréchal de Retz sat down, saying that he was tired, and his brother remained by his side.

"So much the better," thought the king, who was very glad to leave his spies behind.

Tavannes made sport of the two Florentines, who were left alone amid profound silence, and in a place where they had naught but the sky over their heads and only cats for auditors. They availed themselves of that circumstance to exchange thoughts which they would not have expressed in words in any other spot on earth, thoughts suggested by the events of the evening.

"Albert," said the grand master to the marshal, "the king will prevail over the queen; we are making a great mistake, so far as our own fortunes are concerned, by remaining faithful to Catherine's. If we go over to the king at the moment when he is looking for supporters against his mother and adroit men to serve him, we shall not be driven away like wild beasts when the queen-mother is banished, imprisoned, or killed."

"With such ideas as those, you will not prosper, Charles," the marshal gravely replied. "You will follow your king to the tomb, and he has not long to live; he is worn out by dissipation. Cosmo Ruggieri has predicted that he will die next year."

"The dying boar often kills the hunter," said

Charles de Gondi. "This conspiracy of the Duc d'Alençon, the King of Navarre, and the Prince of Condé, in which La Mole and Coconnas are involved, is more dangerous than profitable. In the first place, the King of Navarre, whom the queen-mother hoped to take red-handed, has become suspicious of her and is taking no part in it. He proposes to profit by the conspiracy, without running any of the risks involved in it. In the second place, to-day they all have the idea of placing the crown on the head of the Duc d'Alençon, who is turning Calvinist."

"*Budelone!* don't you see that this conspiracy enables our queen to ascertain what the Huguenots are able to do with the Duc d'Alençon, and what the king means to do with the Huguenots? for the king is negotiating with them; but, to make the king ride a wooden horse, to-morrow the queen will tell him all about this conspiracy, which will neutralize all his plans."

"Ah!" said Charles de Gondi, "by dint of following our advice, she has become stronger than we. That is excellent."

"Excellent for the Duc d'Anjou, who would rather be King of France than King of Poland, and to whom I am going to make the whole matter clear."

"Are you leaving Paris, Albert?"

"To-morrow. Was not I assigned to the duty of attending the King of Poland? I shall overtake him at Venice, where their Highnesses have undertaken to entertain him."

"You are prudence itself."

"*Che bestia!* I swear to you that we do not incur the slightest danger by remaining at court. If there were any danger, should I go away? I should remain with our dear mistress."

"Dear!" echoed the grand master; "she is just the woman to drop her instruments on the spot when she finds them heavy."

"*O coglione!* you want to be a soldier, and yet you are afraid of death, eh? Every *profession* has its duties, and we have our duties to fortune. When we attach ourselves to kings, the source of all temporal power, who protect and exalt and enrich our families, we must vow to them the same love that fills the martyr's heart for Heaven; we must be prepared to suffer in their cause; when they sacrifice us to their throne, we can afford to die, for we die as much for ourselves as for them, and our families survive. *Ecco!*"

"You are right, Albert; she has given you the venerable duchy of Retz."

"Listen," rejoined the marshal. "The queen relies confidently on the skill of the Ruggieri to reconcile her with her son. When our rascal refused to make any further use of René, the crafty creature readily divined what her son suspected. But who knows what the king carries in his bag? Perhaps he is hesitating only concerning his course of conduct toward his mother, for he hates her, do you understand? He told the queen something of his plans, the queen talked them over with Madame

de Fiesco, Madame de Fiesco reported everything to the queen-mother, and since then the king conceals everything from his wife."

"It was time," said Charles de Gondi.

"Time for what?"

"To find something for the king to do," replied the grand master, who, although he was not so fully in Catherine's confidence as his brother, was no less clear-sighted.

"Charles, I have helped you to a great career," said the marshal, gravely; "but if you wish to be a duke also, be, as I am, our mistress's *âme damnée;* she will remain queen, for she is stronger than all the rest of them. Madame de Sauves is with her, and the Duc d'Alençon and the King of Navarre are always with Madame de Sauves; Catherine will continue to hold them all in leash under this king, yes, and under King Henri III. God grant that he be not ungrateful!"

"Why?"

"His mother does too much for him."

"Oho! But I hear a noise in Rue Saint-Honoré," exclaimed the grand master; "René's door just closed. Don't you hear the footsteps of several men? The Ruggieri are arrested."

"Ah! *diavolo!* there's prudence for you! The king has not been as impetuous as usual. But where will he put them in prison? Let us go and see what happens."

The two brothers reached the corner of Rue de l'Autruche as the king entered his mistress's house.

By the light of the torch held by the concierge, they could distinguish Tavannes and the Ruggieri.

"Well, well, Tavannes," cried the grand master, running after the king's companion, who was returning to the Louvre, "what has happened to you?"

"We alighted in a full consistory of sorcerers; we arrested two of them who are friends of yours, and who will be able to explain, for the benefit of French noblemen, by what means you succeeded in getting two offices under the crown into your hands, being a foreigner," remarked Tavannes, half-jesting, half-serious.

"And the king?" queried the grand master, like a man who cared but little for Tavannes's enmity.

"He remains with his mistress."

"My brother and I have prospered by virtue of the most absolute devotion to our masters, a noble and honorable course which you, too, have adopted, my dear duke," retorted the Maréchal de Retz.

The three courtiers walked along together in silence. Just as they parted, each of them being joined by his retainers to escort him home, two men glided swiftly along the walls that bordered Rue de l'Autruche. Those two men were the king and the Count of Solern, who soon reached the bank of the Seine at a point where a boat and rowers, selected by the German nobleman, awaited them. In a few seconds they were on the opposite shore.

"My mother has not gone to bed!" exclaimed the king; "she will see us; we made a bad choice for a rendezvous."

"She will think it is a duel," replied Solern; "and how could she distinguish us at this distance?"

"Oh! well, let her see me," cried Charles, "my mind is made up now!"

The king and his confidant leaped ashore and walked rapidly in the direction of the Pré-aux-Clercs. On arriving there, Solern, who was in advance of the king, met a man acting as sentinel, with whom he exchanged a few words and who then withdrew to join his companions. A moment later, two men, who seemed to be of princely rank, judging from the respectful manner of their picket, left the place where they were hiding behind a dilapidated fence and approached the king, before whom they bent the knee; but Charles raised them before their knees reached the ground, and said:

"No ceremony, we are all gentlemen here."

The three gentlemen were soon joined by a venerable old man, who might have been taken for the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, had he not died in the preceding year. All four walked rapidly, in order to reach a place where their conference could not be heard by their attendants, and Solern followed at a short distance to watch over the king. That faithful retainer yielded to a suspicion which Charles, like a man whose life has become too heavy a burden, did not share. Solern was the only witness, on the king's side, of the conference, which soon became animated.

"Sire," said one of the three, "the Connétable

de Montmorency, who was the king your father's best friend and who knew all his secrets, agreed with the Maréchal de Saint-André that Madame Catherine must be sewn in a bag and thrown into the river. Had that been done, many excellent men would still be on their feet."

"I have enough executions on my conscience, monsieur," replied the king.

"Very well, sire," said the youngest of the four, "from any place of exile, Queen Catherine will find a way to throw everything into confusion and to find auxiliaries. Have we not everything to fear from the Guises, who, nine years ago, formed the plan of a monstrous Catholic alliance to the secret of which Your Majesty was not admitted, and which menaces your throne? That alliance is an invention of Spain, which has not abandoned its project of levelling the Pyrenees. Sire, Calvinism would save France by placing a moral barrier between it and a nation which dreams of world-empire. If the queen-mother be proscribed, she will look to Spain and the Guises for support."

"Messieurs," said the king, "understand that with your aid, peace being re-established without distrust, I will agree to make every individual in the kingdom tremble. *Tête-Dieu!* it is high time for the royal power to assert itself. Be assured that my mother is right in this, you are as deeply interested as I am. Your property, your privileges are indissolubly connected with our throne; when you have allowed the religion to be crushed, the hands of

which you make use will be raised against the throne and against you. I am no longer anxious to fight against ideas with weapons which do not reach them. Let us see if Protestantism will make progress if left to itself; but, above all, let us see what that factious spirit will attack. The admiral, God rest his soul! was not my enemy, he swore that he would keep the revolt within the limits of the spiritual world, and would leave in the temporal kingdom a royal master and submissive subjects. Messieurs, if it be still in your power to do so, set the example, assist your sovereign to quell mutinous subjects who deprive us all of tranquillity. The war diminishes the revenues of all of us and ruins the realm. I am weary of this constant warfare, so weary that, if it be absolutely necessary, I will sacrifice my mother. I will go further, I will have both Protestants and Catholics in attendance on me in equal numbers, and I will place the axe of Louis XI. over them, to make them equal. If Messieurs de Guise are planning a Holy Alliance which attacks our crown, the executioner shall begin his task with them. I understand the miseries of my people, and I am disposed to cut freely into the ranks of the great men who bring disaster on our kingdom. I care little about consciences, I propose henceforth to have submissive subjects, who will work under my guidance, for the prosperity of the State. Messieurs, I give you ten days to negotiate with your people, break up your plots, and return to me, who will become your father. If you refuse, you will see great

changes, for I shall act with people of low degree who will descend upon the nobles at my bidding. I will take for my model some king who has succeeded in pacifying his kingdom by crushing stronger men than you who dared to defy him. If the Catholic troops fail me, I have my brother of Spain, whom I will summon to the succor of a menaced throne; and if I lack a minister to execute my will, he will lend me the Duke of Alva."

"In that case, sire, we should have the Germans to match your Spaniards," said one of his interlocutors.

"Cousin," said Charles IX., coldly, "my wife is called Elisabeth of Austria, and you might fail to procure assistance in that direction; but take my advice, let us fight alone, and not call in the foreigner. You are the object of my mother's hatred, and you are sufficiently attached to me to be my second in the duel I am about to fight with her: very good, listen to this. You seem to me so worthy of esteem, that I offer you the office of constable; you will not betray us as the other did."

The prince to whom Charles spoke, took his hand and struck his own upon it.

"*Ventre-saint-gris!*" he said, "this is enough, brother, to make one forget many injuries. But, sire, the head cannot go forward without the tail, and our tail is difficult to move. Give us more than ten days; we need at least a month to make our people listen to reason. At the end of that time, we shall be masters."

"A month, so be it. My only representative will be Villeroy; you will trust him alone, whatever others may say to you."

"One month," said the three noblemen, with one voice; "that will be long enough."

"There are five of us, messieurs," said the king, "five men of honor. If there be treachery, we shall know whom to blame."

The three strangers kissed the king's hand and left him, with marks of the greatest respect.

When he recrossed the Seine, the clock on the Louvre was striking four.

Queen Catherine had not retired.

"My mother is still awake," said Charles to the Count of Solern.

"She has her forge as well as you," replied the German.

"My dear count, what do you think of a king who is reduced to the necessity of conspiring?" said Charles, bitterly, after a pause.

"I think, sire, that if you would allow me to throw yonder woman into the water, as the young prince suggested, France would soon be at peace."

"Parricide, after the Saint Bartholomew, count? No, no! exile. When she has once fallen, my mother will not have a single retainer, not an adherent."

"Very well, sire," rejoined Solern, "order me to go and arrest her at once and escort her out of the kingdom; for she will have changed your mind to-morrow."

"Well, come to my forge," said the king; "no one will overhear us there; besides, I do not wish my mother to suspect the capture of the Ruggieri. Knowing that I am here, the good woman will suspect nothing, and we can decide upon the necessary measures for her arrest."

When the king, followed by Solern, entered the lower room which he used as a workshop, he pointed to the forge and all its appurtenances with a smile:

"I do not believe," he said, "that among all the kings France will have hereafter, there will be another who will take pleasure in such work. But when I am really king, I will not forge swords, but will cause them all to be replaced in their scabbards."

"Sire," said Solern, "the fatigue of the tennis-court, your work at this forge, hunting, and, if I may venture to say it, love, are cabriolets which the devil gives you to carry you more rapidly to Saint-Denis."

"Solern!" said the king, sorrowfully, "if you knew what a fire has been kindled in my heart and my body! nothing can extinguish it. Are you sure of the men who have the custody of the Ruggieri?"

"As of myself."

"Very well; during the day that is beginning, I shall determine upon my course of action. Reflect upon the means of carrying it out, I will give you my final orders at five o'clock, at Madame de Belleville's."

*

As the first rays of dawn were contending for mastery with the light in the workshop, the king, whom Solern had left alone, heard his door open and saw his mother, outlined in the half-light like a ghost. Although very nervous and impressionable, Charles was not startled, albeit, under existing circumstances, the apparition acquired a sombre and mysterious significance.

"Monsieur," she said, "you are killing yourself—"

"I am proving the accuracy of horoscopes," he retorted, with a bitter smile. "But are not you yourself, madame, as early a riser as I?"

"We have both been up all night, monsieur, but for very different reasons. When you went to confer with your bitterest enemies in the open country, concealing your movements from your mother, abetted by Tavannes and the Gondis, with whom you pretended to be going out to scour the streets, I read despatches which contained the proofs of a dangerous conspiracy in which your brother the Duc d'Alençon, your brother-in-law the King of Navarre, the Prince de Condé, and half of the grandees in the kingdom are involved. They aim at nothing less than robbing you of the crown by taking forcible possession of your person. These gentry already have fifty thousand excellent troops under their orders."

"Indeed!" said the king, with an incredulous air.

"Your brother is turning Huguenot," added the queen.

"My brother is going over to the Huguenots?" cried Charles, brandishing the sword he held in his hand.

"Yes, the Duc d'Alençon, a Huguenot at heart, will soon be one in fact. Your sister, the Queen of Navarre, has but little affection left for you; she loves Monsieur le Duc d'Alençon, she loves Bussy, she also loves little La Mole."

"What a heart!" exclaimed the king.

"Little La Mole," continued the queen, "can think of no better way to become great than by presenting France with a king of his making. He will be constable, it is said."

"Wretched Margot!" cried the king; "this is what comes of her marriage to a heretic."

"That would amount to nothing, save with the head of the younger branch of your family, whom you have placed near the throne despite my advice, and who would like to see you killing one another! The House of Bourbon is the enemy of the House of Valois; understand this, monsieur: a younger branch should always be kept in absolute poverty, for it is a conspirator by birth, and it is mere folly to give it arms when it has none, or to allow it to keep them when it seizes them. Let every scion of a younger branch be incapable of doing any injury, that is the law of thrones. The sovereigns of Asia follow that

rule.—The proofs I speak of are up yonder in my closet, where I begged you to go with me when I left you last evening, but you had other plans. A month hence, if we do not look to ourselves, you will have shared the fate of Charles the Simple."

"A month hence!" cried Charles IX., thunderstruck by the coincidence of that date with the delay demanded by the princes that very night. "Within the month we shall be masters!" he said to himself, repeating their words. "You say that you have proofs, madame?" he added aloud.

"They are irrefutable, monsieur, they come from my daughter Marguerite. She is alarmed herself by the probabilities of such a combination, and despite her affection for your brother D'Alençon, the throne of the Valois has, this time, appealed to her heart more strongly than all her amours. She demands as the price of her revelations that nothing be done to La Mole; but that fellow seems to me a dangerous knave whom we should put out of the way, as well as the Comte de Coconnas, your brother D'Alençon's man. As for the Prince de Condé, that child agrees to everything, provided that I am thrown into the river; I don't know whether he means that as a sort of wedding-present for giving him his pretty wife. This is a serious matter, monsieur. You talk about predictions!—I know of one which gives the throne of the Valois to the House of Bourbon, and, if we do not beware, it will be fulfilled. Do not be angry with your sister, she has behaved well in this.—My son," she continued, after a pause, giving a tender

intonation to her voice, "many evil-minded people in the service of Messieurs de Guise seek to sow discord between you and me, although we are the only persons in this kingdom whose interests are precisely identical: remember that. You reproach yourself now for the Saint Bartholomew, I know; you accuse me of having forced it upon you. Catholicism, monsieur, is the natural bond between Spain, France, and Italy, three countries which may, by secretly and skilfully following a shrewdly-devised plan, be united under the House of Valois, with the assistance of time. Do not destroy the chances of such a result by cutting the cord which holds those three kingdoms together in the circle of one faith. Why should not the Valois and the Medici carry out for their own glory the plan of Charles V., who lacked the necessary brains? Let us relegate the race of Joanna the Mad to the new world, where it has gained a foothold. The Medici, masters at Florence and Rome, will subdue Italy for you; they will ensure you all its advantages by a commercial treaty and a treaty of alliance, acknowledging that they hold Piedmont, the Milanais, and Naples, to which you have just claims, as fiefs of the French crown. These, monsieur, are the reasons for the war to the death which we are waging on the Huguenots. Why do you compel us to tell you these things again and again? Charlemagne made a mistake in extending his power toward the north. Yes, France is a body whose heart lies on the Gulf of Lyon, and whose two arms are

Spain and Italy. In that way, she rules the Mediterranean, which is, as it were, a basket into which fall the treasures of the Orient, upon which those Venetian gentry are fattening to-day in the teeth of Philip II. If the friendship of the Medici and your own rights justify you in hoping for Italy, force or alliances, perhaps an inheritance, will give you Spain. As to this last matter, give warning to the ambitious House of Austria, to which the Guelphs sold Italy, and which still dreams of possessing Spain. Although your wife is of that House, humble Austria, squeeze it tight in order to suffocate it; there are the enemies of your kingdom, for thence aid is furnished the reformers. Do not listen to the people who find their profit in our lack of harmony, and who are constantly belaboring your brain with the idea that I am an enemy in your own household. Have I prevented your having heirs? Why does your mistress bear you a son and the queen a daughter? Why have you not to-day three heirs who would cut at the root the hopes upon which all these seditious schemes are based? Is it for me, monsieur, to answer these questions? If you had a son, would Monsieur d'Alençon be conspiring?"

As she concluded, Catherine fastened upon her son the fascinating gaze which the bird of prey fastens upon its victim. At that moment, the daughter of the Medici was beautiful in her peculiar style of beauty; her real sentiments shone upon her face, which, like that of the gambler

seated at the green cloth, gleamed with innumerable greedy thoughts. Charles IX. no longer saw before him the mother of a single man, but, as was said of her, the mother of armies and of empires—*mater castrorum*. She had unfolded the wings of her genius and was soaring boldly in the lofty regions of the policy of the Medici and Valois, outlining the gigantic plans which formerly terrified Henri II., and which, transmitted by the genius of the Medici to Richelieu, are inscribed forever in the archives of the House of Bourbon. But Charles IX., seeing that his mother took so many precautions, said to himself that they must be necessary, and wondered to what end she took them. He lowered his eyes, he hesitated, his distrust could not yield to mere words. Catherine was astonished to find how deeply suspicion had taken root in her son's heart.

"Well, monsieur," she said, "will you never understand me? What are you and I compared with the eternity of kingly crowns? Do you suppose that I have other designs than those which should occupy our thoughts while we dwell on this sphere and hold sway over empires?"

"Madame, I will go with you to your closet, we must act—"

"Act!" cried Catherine, "let us allow them to go on and take them in the act; the law will deliver you from them. For God's sake, monsieur, let us seem to be well-disposed toward them."

The queen withdrew. The king remained alone for a moment, utterly overwhelmed.

AT MME. DE BELLEVILLE'S

Marie, surprised by his silence, knelt in order to examine more carefully her royal master's pale face, and detected then the indications of terrible weariness and of a melancholy more consuming than all the melancholies she had previously charmed away.

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AT MME. DE VILLEVILLE'S

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AT MME. DE BELLEVILLE'S

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"In which direction is the ambush?" he cried. "Is she deceiving me, or are they? Which is the better policy? *Deus! discerne meam causam*," he continued, with tears in his eyes. "Life is a burden to me. I prefer death, natural or violent, to this constant tugging in opposite directions," he added, bringing the hammer down upon the anvil with such force that the walls of the Louvre trembled.—"*Mon Dieu!*" he continued, looking up at the sky as he left the palace, "do Thou, for whose holy religion I fight, endow me with the keenness of Thy glance that I may penetrate my mother's heart by questioning the Ruggieri."

The little house in which Madame de Belleville lived, and in which Charles IX. had bestowed his prisoners, was the last but one on Rue de l'Autruche toward Rue Saint-Honoré. The street-gate, flanked by two small brick pavilions, seemed very simple in design at a time when gateways and their surroundings were so elaborately ornamented. It consisted of two stone pilasters, cut as diamonds are cut, and the arch represented a recumbent woman holding a cornucopia. The door, which was heavily bound with iron, had a wicket at the level of the eye through which to scrutinize persons who sought admission. There was a concierge in each pavilion. The extremely capricious pleasure of King Charles required the services of a concierge night and day. There was a small courtyard paved in the Venetian style. At that period, when carriages had not been invented, ladies went about on horseback or in litters,

and a courtyard might be magnificent with no danger of injury from horses or carriages. We must constantly bear this fact in mind, in order to understand the narrowness of the streets, the diminutive size of the courtyards, and certain details of fifteenth-century dwellings.

The house, which had one floor above the ground-floor, was crowned by a carved frieze which supported a roof with four sides, with a flat space at the apex. The roof was pierced with dormer-windows, with pediments and frames which the chisel of some great artist had covered with dentils and arabesques. Each of the three windows on the first floor also was noticeable by reason of its embroidery of stonework which the brick walls threw into bold relief. On the ground-floor, a double stoop, very delicately decorated, with a true lover's knot in stone on the landing, led to the main entrance, surrounded by bosses carved in the Venetian style with diamond-like facets,—a system of decoration which was repeated in the windows at the right and left.

A garden laid out and planted in the fashion then in vogue, and abounding in rare flowers, occupied a space behind the house equal in extent to the courtyard. The walls were covered with vines. A silvery pine stood in the centre of a small lawn. This lawn was separated from the flower-beds by winding paths leading to a small clump of trimmed yews at the farther end. Upon the walls were laid mosaics of multicolored pebbles, arranged in patterns that were commonplace, it is true, but

pleasing to the eye, none the less, because of the wealth of bright coloring, blending with that of the flowers. The façade on the garden resembled that on the courtyard; it had a dainty carved balcony over the door in front of the window in the centre. On the garden, and on the courtyard as well, the decorations of this central window projected several feet and were carried up to the frieze, so that it resembled a small pavilion, like a lantern. The frames of the other windows were incrusted with valuable marbles surrounded by stone.

Despite the exquisite taste which characterized the whole house, it had a melancholy aspect. The rooms were darkened by the neighboring houses and by the roofs of the Hôtel d'Alençon, which cast a shadow on the courtyard and garden; moreover, profound silence reigned there. But that silence, that shadow, that solitude, were full of comfort for a soul that could give itself over to a single thought, as in a cloister where one meditates, or in the quiet house where one loves.

Who could fail now to divine the interior refinement of that retreat, the only spot in his whole realm where the last but one of the Valois could pour out his heart, tell of his sorrows, display his taste for the arts, and abandon himself to the poetic life which he loved—inclinations thwarted, one and all, by the cares of the most burdensome of royalties. There only, his greatness of soul and his exalted merit were appreciated; there alone did he abandon himself, during a few fleeting months, the last months

of his life, to the joys of paternity, joys into which he plunged with the frenzy which the presentiment of a horrible death near at hand imparted to all his acts.

The next afternoon, Marie was putting the finishing touches to her toilet in her oratory, which was the boudoir of those days. She was adjusting the curls of her lovely black hair to adapt them to a new velvet cap, and scrutinizing herself carefully in the mirror.

"It is nearly four o'clock, that interminable council is at an end," she said to herself. "Jacob has returned from the Louvre, where there is great excitement because of the number of councillors summoned and the length of the session. What can possibly have happened? some disaster. *Mon Dieu!* does *he* know how the heart is worn away by waiting in vain! Perhaps he has gone hunting? If he has enjoyed himself, all will be for the best. If I see that he is in good spirits, I will forget that I have suffered."

She ran her hands up and down her dress to smooth a slight wrinkle, then turned sidewise to see how her dress fitted her; but as she turned, she saw the king on the couch. The carpet deadened his footsteps so completely that he had been able to steal in unheard.

"You startled me," she said, with a little shriek of surprise, quickly checked.

"Were you thinking of me?" said the king.

"When do I not think of you?" she asked, sitting down by his side.

She removed his cap and cloak, and ran her hands through his hair, as if she would comb it with her fingers. Charles allowed her to do it and made no reply. Marie, surprised by his silence, knelt in order to examine more carefully her royal master's pale face, and detected then the indications of terrible weariness and of a melancholy more consuming than all the melancholies she had previously charmed away. She forced back a tear and refrained from speaking, in order not to intensify by imprudent words a suffering of which she did not as yet know the nature. She did what loving women do on such occasions: she kissed that brow furrowed by premature wrinkles, and those haggard cheeks, trying to impress the freshness of her own heart upon that careworn heart, pouring forth her spirit in gentle caresses which met with no success. She raised her head to the level of the king's, embraced him gently in her slender arms, then hid her face against that suffering breast, watching for the opportune moment to question the dejected invalid.

"Charlot, dear, will you not tell your poor, anxious sweetheart the thoughts which cloud your dear brow and drive the color from your sweet red lips?"

"With the exception of Charlemagne," he said in a low, hollow voice, "every king of France named Charles has come to a miserable end."

"Nonsense!" said she, "how about Charles VIII.?"

"In the prime of life," replied the king, "that unfortunate prince struck his head against the frame of a door at the château of Amboise, which he was

decorating, and he died in horrible agony. His death gave the crown to our family."

"Charles VII. reconquered his kingdom."

"Little one,"—the king lowered his voice,—"he died of hunger, dreading lest he should be poisoned by the dauphin, who had already caused the death of beautiful Agnes Sorel. The father feared his son; to-day, the son fears his mother!"

"Why do you burrow in the past?" she said, thinking of the horrible life of Charles VI.

"What can you expect, dearest? kings can ascertain what fate awaits them without having recourse to soothsayers; they need only consult history. I am at this moment intent upon avoiding the fate of Charles the Simple, who was robbed of his crown, and died in prison after seven years of captivity."

"Charles V. drove out the English!" she exclaimed, triumphantly.

"Not he, but Du Guesclin; for he was poisoned by Charles of Navarre, and simply languished for years."

"But Charles IV.?"

"He married three times, but never had an heir, notwithstanding the virile beauty which distinguished the children of Philippe le Bel. The first Valois line came to an end with him, and the second line will end in the same way; the queen has given me a daughter only, and I shall not leave her *enceinte* when I die, for a minority would be the greatest calamity with which the kingdom could be afflicted. In any event, would a son of mine live? This name

Charles is of evil augury, Charlemagne exhausted all its good fortune. If I should become King of France again, I should tremble to call myself Charles X."

"Who has designs on your crown, pray?"

"My brother D'Alençon is conspiring against me. I see enemies everywhere—"

"Monsieur," said Marie, with a bewitching little pout, "tell me something more cheerful."

"My precious jewel," replied the king, earnestly, "never call me 'monsieur,' even in jest; you remind me of my mother, who constantly stabs me with that title, by which she seems to rob me of my crown. She says 'my son' to the Duc d'Anjou, I mean the King of Poland."

"SIRE," said Marie, clasping her hands as if she were praying, "there is a realm in which you are adored. YOUR MAJESTY fills it with his glory and his might; and there the word 'monsieur' means my beloved lord."

She unclasped her hands, and with a pretty gesture pointed to her heart. The words were so *musiquées*—to use a word then in vogue to depict the melodies of love—that Charles put his arm about her waist, lifted her with the nervous strength for which he was noted, seated her on his knee, and gently rubbed his brow against the curls which his mistress had arranged so coquettishly.

Marie deemed the moment favorable, and ventured a kiss or two, which Charles endured rather than accepted; then, between two kisses, she said to him:

"If my people did not lie, you prowled about Paris

all last night, as in the days when you used to do foolish things like a genuine younger son."

"Yes," said the king, still lost in thought.

"I suppose you beat the watch and stripped an honest bourgeois or two? Who, pray, are the men whom you gave me to keep, and who are such criminals that you forbade any communication with them? Never was maiden held in stricter seclusion than those fellows, who have neither eaten nor drunk; Solern's Germans will allow no one to go near the room in which you placed them. Is it a jest? or is it a serious matter?"

"Yes," said the king, rousing himself from his reverie, "I set out for a run over the roofs with Tavannes and the Gondis; I hoped to find in them the companions of my escapades in the old days, but our legs are not what they used to be: we dared not jump across the streets. However, we did cross two courtyards, leaping from one roof to the other. At last, when we had arrived at a certain gable a few steps from here, Tavannes and I agreed, as we clung to the bar of a chimney, that we would do no more of it. Neither of us, if he had been alone, would have taken that last leap."

"You went first, I will wager."

The king smiled.

"I know why you risk your life thus."

"Oh! the lovely sorceress!"

"You are tired of life."

"A plague on sorcerers! I am haunted by them," said the king, resuming a serious expression.

"My sorcery is love," she replied, with a smile. "Since the blessed hour when you first loved me, have I not always divined your thoughts? And if you will allow me to tell you the truth, the thoughts which torment you to-day are unworthy of a king."

"Am I a king?" said he, bitterly.

"Can you not be? What did Charles VII. do, whose name you bear? he listened to his mistress, monseigneur, and reconquered his kingdom when it was overrun by the English as yours is by the adherents of the new religion. Your last *coup d'État* marked out the path that you must follow. Exterminate the heresy."

"You blamed the ruse," said Charles, "and to-day—"

"It is something that is done," she rejoined; "besides, I am of Madame Catherine's opinion, that it was better to do it yourself than to let the Guises do it."

"Charles VII. had only men to contend with, and I am confronted with ideas," replied the king. "One can kill men, but one cannot kill words! The Emperor Charles V. abandoned the attempt, his son Philip II. is exhausting his strength at it, and it will be the death of all us kings. Upon whom can I lean for support? On the right, among the Catholics, I find the Guises threatening me; on the left are the Calvinists, who will never forgive me for the death of poor Pére Coligny and the August bloodletting; moreover, they aim at the suppression of the throne; and lastly, in front of me, I have my mother—"

"Arrest her, reign alone," said Marie, in a low tone, close to the king's ear.

"I intended to do so yesterday, and to-day I cannot. It is very easy for you to talk about it."

"The distance is not so very great between an apothecary's daughter and a doctor's," rejoined Marie Touchet, who was fond of jesting concerning the origin erroneously attributed to Catherine.

The king frowned.

"Do not take such liberties, Marie! Catherine de' Medici is my mother, and you should tremble at the thought of—"

"What is it that you dread?"

"Poison!" exclaimed the king, beside himself.

"Poor child!" cried Marie, restraining her tears, for the spectacle of such strength joined to such weakness had moved her deeply.—"Ah!" she continued, "you make me hate Madame Catherine, who used to seem to me so kind and good, but whose acts of kindness now seem to me base perfidy. Why is she so kind to me and so cruel to you? During my stay in Dauphiné, I learned certain facts concerning the beginning of your reign, which you have always concealed from me, and it seems to me that the queen, your mother, has caused all your misfortunes."

"How so?" cried the king, profoundly interested.

"Women whose hearts and whose purposes are pure rely upon their virtues to govern the men they love; but women who wish them no good govern them by using their evil inclinations as levers; now,

the queen has transformed some of your noble qualities into vices, and has made you believe that your evil instincts were virtues. Was that the proper part for a mother to play? Be a tyrant after the manner of Louis XI., inspire profound terror; imitate King Philip, banish the Italians, drive out the Guises, and confiscate the estates of the Calvinists; you will magnify yourself in that solitude and you will save the throne. The moment is favorable, your brother is in Poland."

"We are two babes in politics," said Charles, bitterly, "we know how to do nothing but make love. Alas! my dearest love, I thought of all this yesterday. I determined to accomplish great things: bah! my mother simply breathed on my house of cards. At a distance, questions are clearly outlined, like mountain-peaks, and everyone says: 'I would make an end of Calvinism, I would bring Messieurs de Guise to their senses, I would sever my connection with the court of Rome, I would lean on the people, on the bourgeoisie;' in a word, everything seems most simple at a distance; but when you undertake to climb the mountains, the difficulties become more and more evident as you draw nearer and nearer to them. Calvinism is in itself of the very slightest interest to the party leaders, and Messieurs de Guise, those fanatical Catholics, would be in despair to see Calvinism destroyed. Everyone obeys his own selfish interests first of all, and religious opinions serve as a cloak for insatiable ambitions. The party of Charles IX. is the

weakest of all: the parties of the King of Navarre, of the King of Poland, of the Duc d'Alençon, of the Condés, of the Guises, and of my mother, form coalitions against one another and leave me all alone, even in my council. Of all these elements of disturbance, my mother is the strongest, and she has demonstrated to me the utter futility of my plans. We are surrounded by subjects who snap their fingers at the law. The axe of Louis XI., of which you just spoke, we have not. The Parliament would never convict the Guises, nor the King of Navarre, nor the Condés, nor my brothers; it would think that it was setting the kingdom on fire. One must have the courage required to commit murder; the throne will come to terms some day with these insolent villains who have nullified the law; but where are we to find faithful arms? The council held this morning filled me with disgust of everything: on all sides treachery, on all sides clashing interests. I am weary of wearing my crown, I have no wish save to die in peace."

And he relapsed into his gloomy musing.

"Disgusted with everything!" echoed Marie Touchet, sorrowfully, respecting her lover's dejected torpor.

Charles was, in fact, utterly prostrated both in mind and body, a condition produced by the exhaustion of all his faculties and intensified by the discouragement consequent upon the extent of the disaster, the evident impossibility of triumph, or the sight of obstacles so numerous that genius itself

would be dismayed. The king's prostration was proportioned to the height of exaltation which his courage and his ideas had recently attained; then, too, a paroxysm of nervous melancholy, engendered by the disease from which he was suffering, had seized him when he came forth from the protracted council held in his closet. Marie saw that he was in the throes of one of those attacks in which everything is painful and annoying, even love; so she knelt on the floor, her head resting on the king's knees, who kept his hand in his mistress's hair, without moving, without a word, without a sigh; and she was as motionless as he. Charles was buried in the lethargy of impotence, and Marie in the despairing stupor of the loving woman who sees in the distance the boundaries at which love ends.

The lovers remained thus in absolute silence for a long moment, one of those moments when every reflection makes a wound, when the clouds of an inward tempest cast a veil over everything, even the memories of happiness. Marie believed that she was partly responsible for this terrifying fit of depression. She asked herself, not without terror, if the excessive joy with which the king had greeted her return, and the violent passion which she did not feel strong enough to contend against, had not enfeebled Charles IX. in body and mind. As she raised her eyes, streaming with tears, toward her lover, she saw tears in his eyes and on his pallid cheeks. That sympathy which united them even in grief moved the king so deeply that he threw off his

lethargy like a horse pricked with the spur; he put his arm around Marie's waist, and before she could guess his purpose, he had seated her on the couch.

"I will be king no more," he said, "I will be your lover, nothing else, and forget everything in pleasure! I prefer to die happy, and not consumed by the anxieties of the throne."

The tone in which he spoke and the fire that gleamed in his eyes, but now lifeless, caused Marie a horrible pang instead of gratifying her. At that moment, she accused her love of complicity in causing the disease of which the king was dying.

"You forget your prisoners," she said, springing abruptly to her feet.

"What are those men to me! I give them leave to assassinate me."

"What! are they assassins?" she exclaimed.

"Be not alarmed, we have them fast, dear child! do not think of them, but of me; do you not love me?"

"Sire!" she cried.

"'Sire?'" he repeated, while his eyes flashed fire, so violent was the first outburst of wrath called forth by his mistress's unseasonable respect. "You have an understanding with my mother!"

"O God!" cried Marie, gazing at the portrait on her prie-Dieu, and striving to reach it in order to kneel and pray. "O God, grant that he understand me!"

"Aha!" rejoined the king, in a threatening tone, "so you have something to reproach yourself for?"

He gazed at her as he held her in his arms, he buried his eyes in hers.

"I have heard of the mad passion of a certain D'Entragues for you," he said, wildly, "and, since Captain Balzac, their grandfather, married a Visconti at Milan, the knaves stick at nothing."

Marie met the king's gaze with such a proud expression that he was ashamed. At that moment, little Charles de Valois, who had just awakened, and whom his nurse was evidently bringing to his mother, made himself heard in the adjoining salon.

"Come in, La Bourguignonne!" said Marie, taking the child from the nurse and carrying him to the king. "You are more of a child than he," she said, half offended, half mollified.

"He is very beautiful," said Charles, taking his son in his arms.

"I alone know how closely he resembles you," said Marie: "he has your gestures and your smile already."

"So small?" queried the king, with a smile.

"Men will never believe such things," she said; "but take him, my Charlot, play with him, watch him! see, am I not right?"

"It is true!" exclaimed the king, surprised by a motion on the part of the child which seemed to him a miniature copy of one of his own gestures.

"The lovely blossom!" said the mother. "*He* will never leave me! he will never cause me any grief."

The king played with his son, jumped him up and

down, kissed him with intense passion, said to him the foolish, unmeaning words, the fascinating onomatopœia which mothers and nurses invent; he talked in a childish voice, and finally his brow cleared, a joyful expression returned to his saddened face, and when Marie saw that her lover had forgotten everything, she laid her head on his shoulder and whispered these words in his ear:

"Will you not tell me, my Charlot, why you give me assassins to watch, and who these men are, and what you intend to do with them? And, lastly, where did you go on the roofs? I trust that there's no woman in the case?"

"Do you still love me so much?" said the king, surprised by the clear radiance of one of those questioning glances which women know how to cast on occasion.

"Could you doubt me?" she replied, the tears glistening between her lovely eyelids.

"There are women concerned in my adventure; but they are witches. Where was I?"

"You were within a few steps of here, on the gable end of a house," said Marie; "on what street?"

"Rue Saint-Honoré, dearest," said the king, who seemed to have recovered his self-control, and with it the determination to prepare his mistress for the scene about to take place under her roof. "As we passed through that street last night in our wanderings, my eyes were attracted by a bright light from a window under the eaves of the house occupied

by René, purveyor of perfumery and gloves to my mother, yourself, and the court. I have violent suspicions as to what goes on in that man's house, and if I am poisoned, the poison is brewed there."

"I leave him to-morrow," said Marie.

"Ah! so you kept him when I gave him up?" cried the king. "My life was here," he continued in a gloomy tone, "doubtless they have sown death here for me."

"But, my child, I have just returned from Dauphiné, with our dauphin," she said, with a smile, "and René has not supplied me with anything since the Queen of Navarre's death. Go on—you climbed up to the roof of René's house?"

"Yes. In a moment, followed by Tavannes, I had reached a spot whence I could see, unseen myself, the interior of the devil's kitchen, and observe things there which inspired the measures I have taken. Did you ever examine the eaves of that damned Florentine's house? The windows on the street are always closed, except the last one from which he can see the Hôtel de Soissons and the column my mother built for her astrologer, Cosmo Ruggieri. Under those eaves there is a sleeping-room and a corridor lighted only from the courtyard, so that, in order to see what is going on there, one must climb where no man would ever dream of climbing, to the coping of a high wall which ends at René's roof. The men who have set up in those rooms the crucibles in which they distil death counted on the cowardice of Parisians to ensure their not

being watched; but they reckoned without their Charles de Valois. I crawled along the gutter to a window, where I could stand up straight against the jamb by passing my arm around the monkey with which it was ornamented."

"And what did you see, dear heart?" said Marie, trembling with apprehension.

"A den in which the works of darkness are carried on," replied the king. "The first object on which my eyes fell was a tall old man seated in a chair, with a magnificent beard as white as old L'Hôpital's, and dressed like him, in a black velvet gown. Upon his broad forehead, furrowed deep by wrinkles, upon his crown of white hair, upon his placid, watchful face, pale from toil and sleepless nights, were concentrated the beams of a lamp which cast a brilliant light. He was dividing his attention between a venerable manuscript, the parchment of which must have been several centuries old, and two crucibles with fires beneath, in which ungodly concoctions were brewing. The floor, ceiling, and walls of the laboratory were nowhere visible, there were so many animals covering them, and skeletons, dried plants, minerals, and ingredients of all kinds; on one side, books, distilling apparatus, boxes filled with utensils of magic and astrology; on the other, horoscopes, phials, pierced figures,—*envoûtés*—and, it may be, poisons which he furnishes René in payment for the hospitality and shelter which my mother's perfumer accords him. Tavannes and I were thunderstruck, I promise you, by the

aspect of that devil's arsenal; for, simply by looking at it, you fall under the spell, and, had I not been King of France, I should have been afraid.—'Tremble for us both!' I said to Tavannes. But Tavannes's eyes were fascinated by that most mysterious of spectacles. On the couch beside the old man lay a girl of the most peculiar type of beauty, slender and long as a snake, white as an ermine, pale as a corpse, motionless as a statue. It may have been a woman recently exhumed for the purposes of some experiment or other, for she seemed to our eyes to be still wearing her shroud; her eyes were fixed, and I did not see her breathe. The old villain did not pay the least attention to her; I gazed at him with such profound interest that his mind passed into me, I verily believe; by dint of studying him, I ended by admiring that glance, so keen and penetrating and bold, despite the chills of age; those lips moved by thoughts emanating from a desire that seemed unique; lips which remained always grave amid their innumerable folds. Everything about the man indicated a hope which nothing can daunt, which nothing can check. His attitude,—he quivered every instant in his immobility,—the lines of his face, so sharp, so perfectly shaped by a passion that performs the functions of a sculptor's chisel, that idea concentrated on some criminal or scientific experiment, that unwearied intelligence, following close on the heels of nature, vanquished by nature, and bent without breaking under the burden of its audacity which it does not abandon, threatening creation with the fire

it derives therefrom—all combined to fascinate me for a moment. That old man seemed to me more kingly than myself, for his glance embraced the whole world and dominated it. I have resolved to forge no more swords, I propose to soar above the abysses of life as that old man does; his learning seemed to me the surest form of royalty. In fact, I believe in the occult sciences."

"You, the oldest son, the avenger of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church?" said Marie.

"Yes, I!"

"What can have happened to you? Go on; I choose to be afraid for you, and you shall have courage for me."

"With a glance at his clock, the old man rose," continued the king; "he went out, I cannot say how, but I heard the window on Rue Saint-Honoré open. Soon a light shone in the darkness; then I saw another light, on the column of the Hôtel de Soissons, answer the old man's, and by it we could distinguish Cosmo Ruggieri at the top of the column. 'Ah! they have an understanding!' I said to Tavannes, who was horribly suspicious of everything, and who shared my opinion that we should seize those two men and have their ghastly laboratory examined at once. But, before proceeding to a general seizure, we concluded to wait and see what happened. After about a quarter of an hour, the laboratory door opened, and Cosmo Ruggieri, my mother's adviser, the bottomless pit which swallows all the secrets of the court, the man to whom

women apply for help against their husbands and their lovers, and to whom the husbands and lovers apply for help against their unfaithful wives and mistresses, the man who deals in the future and the past, receiving money from every hand, the man who sells horoscopes and is supposed to know everything—that half-devil entered, greeting the old man with a 'Good-evening, brother!' He brought with him a frightful little old woman, toothless, hunchbacked, distorted, crooked as an Indian image, but more horrible; she was as wrinkled as an old apple, her skin had a tinge of saffron, her chin met her nose, her mouth was an almost invisible line, her eyes resembled the black spots on dice, her brow exhaled sardonic bitterness, her hair escaped in gray wisps from beneath a filthy cap; she leaned on a crutch as she walked; she smelt of witchcraft and the stake; she frightened us, for neither Tavannes nor myself took her for a human being—God never made anything so hideous as that. She seated herself on a stool beside the pretty white snake with which Tavannes had fallen in love. The two brothers paid no attention to the old woman or the young one, who formed a ghastly couple. On the one hand, life in death; on the other, death in life."

"My charming poet!" cried Marie, kissing the king.

"'Good-evening, Cosmo,' the old alchemist replied.

"And they both looked at the crucible.

"'What is the moon's power to-day?' the old man asked.

"'Why, *caro Lorenzo*,' replied my mother's astrologer, 'the high tides of September are not yet at an end; we can ascertain nothing while everything is in such confusion.'

"'What says *the Orient* to us to-night?'

"'He has discovered,' replied Cosmo, 'a creative force in the air which gives back to the earth all that it takes from it; he concludes, with us, that everything on earth is the result of a gradual transformation, but that all different things are forms of the same substance.'

"'That is what my predecessor believed,' said Lorenzo. 'Bernard Palissy told me this morning that metals were the result of compression, and that fire, which divides everything, also unites everything; that fire has the power to compress as well as to separate. That fellow has genius.'

"Although I was in such a position that I could not be seen, Cosmo said, taking the dead girl's hand:

"'There is some one near us! Who is it?'

"'The king!' she said.

"Thereupon I showed myself at the window and tapped on the glass; Ruggieri opened the window and I leaped into that hell's kitchen, followed by Tavannes.

"'Yes, the king,' I said to the two Florentines, who seemed paralyzed with fear. 'With all your crucibles and your books, your magic and your science, you could not divine my visit.—I am very

pleased to see the illustrious Lorenzo Ruggieri of whom the queen my mother speaks so mysteriously,' I said to the old man, who rose and bowed. 'You are in the kingdom without my permission, goodman. In whose interest are you working here, you, whose ancestors, from father to son, have been dear to the heart of the House of Medici? Hark ye! You have your hand in so many purses, that people of ordinary greed would long since have been stuffed to repletion with gold; you are too cunning to embark upon criminal enterprises imprudently, but you would have done well not to shut yourselves up like idiots in this kitchen; you must have secret designs, since you are content neither with money nor with power. Whom do you serve? God or the devil? What do you make here? I will have the whole truth, I am capable of understanding it and of maintaining secrecy concerning your enterprises, however blameworthy they may be. You will tell me everything, therefore, without concealment. If you deceive me, you will be severely dealt with. Pagans or Christians, Calvinists or Mahometans, you have my royal word that you may leave the kingdom unpunished, in case you have any peccadilloes upon your consciences. However, I will give you the rest of the night and tomorrow morning to search your consciences, for you are my prisoners, and you will follow me to a place where you will be guarded like precious treasures.'

"Before complying with my orders, the two Florentines consulted each other with a sly glance, and

Lorenzo Ruggieri informed me that I might be certain that no torture could extort their secrets from them; notwithstanding their apparent feebleness, neither pain nor human feelings had any power over them; confidence alone could make their lips tell what their minds withheld. I need not be surprised, he said, that they dealt upon a footing of equality with a king who acknowledged no one but God above him, for their thoughts also came from God. Therefore they claimed from me as much confidence as they accorded me. Now, before undertaking to answer my questions unreservedly, they asked me to place my left hand in the young girl's, and my right in the old woman's. As I did not choose to give them any reason for thinking that I was afraid of witchcraft, I held out my hands. Lorenzo took the right hand, Cosmo the left, and placed them in the hands of the old and the young woman, so that I was like Jesus Christ between his two thieves. Throughout the time that the sorceresses were examining my hands, Cosmo held a mirror before me, requesting me to look at myself in it, and his brother talked with the two women in a strange tongue. Neither Tavannes nor myself could gather the meaning of a single sentence.—Before we brought the two men here, we placed seals on all the exits of that laboratory, which Tavannes undertook to guard until Bernard Palissy and Chapelain, my physician, should be brought there, by my express order, to make an exact inventory of all the drugs that were kept or made

there. In order to keep them in ignorance of the investigations that were being made in their kitchen, and to prevent them from having communication with any person outside, for they might have concocted some scheme with my mother, I placed the two devils in secret confinement here in your house, guarded by Solern's Germans, who are equal to the strongest prison-walls. René himself has been kept in sight in his room by Solern's equerry, and the same is true of the two witches. Now, my dearest darling, since I hold the keys of the cabal, the kings of Thune, the leaders of the legions of sorcery, the princes of Bohemia, the masters of the future, the heirs of all the famous fortune-tellers, I propose to read in your mind and heart, so that we may know what will become of us!"

"I shall be very happy if they can lay my heart bare," said Marie, with no sign of apprehension.

"I know why sorcerers have no terrors for you: you cast spells yourself."

"Will you not have one of these peaches?" she replied, offering him some beautiful fruit on a gilt plate. "See the grapes and pears; I picked them all myself at Vincennes."

"Then I will eat some of them, for there is no other poison to dread than the love-philters that come from your hands."

"You should eat a great deal of fruit, Charles; it would cool your blood, which you are drying up with all your violent passions."

"Should I not also love you a little less?"

"Perhaps," she said. "If the things you love injure you,—and I have thought so!—I can find in my love the strength to deny them to you. I adore Charles the man more than I love the king, and I wish the man to live without these tormenting cares that make him sad and thoughtful."

"Royalty is ruining me."

"True," she replied. "If you were only a poor prince like your brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, the little lady-killer who has not a sou, who possesses naught but a paltry kingdom in Spain, where he will never set foot, and Béarn in France, which gives him barely enough to live on, I should be happy, much happier than if I were really Queen of France."

"But are you not more than the queen? She has King Charles only for the welfare of the kingdom, for what is the queen but politics in another form?"

Marie smiled, and said with a sweet little pout:

"Nothing else, indeed, sire. What about my sonnet—is it written?"

"Dear little one, verses are as difficult to write as edicts of pacification, but I shall finish yours soon. *Mon Dieu!* how pleasant life is to me here! I wish I need never go away. And yet the two Florentines must be questioned. *Tête-Dieu!* I considered that one Ruggieri in the kingdom was more than enough, and behold there are two of them! Listen, my dearest love, you do not lack wit, you would make an excellent lieutenant of police, for you divine everything—"

"But, sire, we imagine whatever we dread, and to us the probable is the true; there, in a word, is the whole secret of our shrewdness."

"Very well, assist me to probe these two men. At this moment, all my plans depend on the result of their examination. Are they innocent? are they guilty? My mother is behind them."

"I hear Jacob's voice on the stairs," said Marie.

Jacob was the king's favorite valet, who attended him in all his expeditions of pleasure; he came to ask if his master wished to speak with the two prisoners.

The king made an affirmative sign, and the mistress of the house gave her orders.

"Jacob," she said, "make everybody leave the house except Monsieur le Dauphin d'Auvergne and his nurse, who may remain. Do you yourself remain in the room below; but, first of all, close the windows, draw the curtains in the salon, and light the candles."

The king's impatience was so great that, before the preparations were completed, he took his seat upon a raised chair beside which his pretty mistress had placed herself, in front of a high white marble fireplace in which a bright fire was blazing. There was a portrait of the king in a red velvet frame in place of the mirror. Charles rested his elbow on the arm of his chair, the better to scrutinize the two Florentines.

*

When the windows were closed and the curtains drawn, Jacob lighted the candles in a carved silver candelabrum, and placed it on the table at which the two Florentines were to sit, so that they might recognize the handiwork of their compatriot Benvenuto Cellini. The rich aspect of that apartment, decorated to suit the taste of the king, became more striking in the bright light. One could see more clearly than by daylight the reddish-brown of the upholstery. The furniture, carved with great delicacy, reflected candle-light and fire-light in its polished ebony panels. The gilding, sparingly distributed, gleamed here and there like eyes, and gave life to the sombre brown which was the prevailing color in that abode of love.

Jacob knocked twice, and, at a word from within, admitted the two Florentines. Marie Touchet was impressed at once by the grandeur of aspect which attracted the attention of great and small to Lorenzo Ruggieri. That austere old man, whose silvery beard was heightened in effect by a black velvet cape, had a forehead like a marble dome. His stern face, whence two black eyes cast a penetrating flame, caused the thrill of emotion that one feels in presence of a genius newly come forth from his profound solitude, a genius the more impressive because his power was not blunted by contact with men.

One might have likened him to the steel of a blade that has never been used.

As for Cosmo Ruggieri, he wore the costume of the courtiers of that period. Marie looked at the king and made a gesture signifying that he had not exaggerated at all in what he had told her, and thanking him for exhibiting that extraordinary man to her.

"I would have liked to see the witches, too," she whispered in the king's ear.

Charles IX., once more lost in thought, did not reply; he was absent-mindedly picking bread-crumbs from his doublet and breeches.

"Your science can produce no effect on the sky, nor compel the sun to appear, my Florentine friends," he began, pointing to the curtains which the gray Parisian atmosphere had lowered. "The light is fading."

"Our science, sire, will furnish us with a sky to suit our whim," said Lorenzo. "The weather is always fine to him who works in a laboratory by the light of his furnaces."

"True," said the king.—"Well, father," he continued, using a title which he commonly applied to old men, "will you explain to us fully the aim of your studies?"

"Who will guarantee us impunity?"

"The king's word," replied Charles, whose curiosity was keenly excited by the question.

Lorenzo seemed to hesitate, whereupon Charles exclaimed:

"What detains you? we are alone."

"Is the King of France here?" inquired the tall old man.

Charles reflected a moment, then answered:

"No."

"But will he not come?" persisted Lorenzo.

"No," said Charles, restraining an angry outburst.

The imposing old man took a chair and sat down. Cosmo, astounded by such presumption, dared not imitate his brother.

"The king is not here, monsieur," said Charles IX., with bitter irony; "but you are in the presence of a lady whose permission you should await."

"He whom you see before you, madame," said the tall old man, thereupon, "is as far above kings as kings are above their subjects, and you will not think me lacking in courtesy when you know my power."

Hearing those insolent words, uttered with true Italian emphasis, Charles and Marie glanced at each other and at Cosmo, whose eyes were fixed upon his brother, and who seemed to be saying to himself: "How will he extricate himself from the evil plight in which we are?"

Indeed, there was but one person present who could appreciate the grandeur and craft of Lorenzo Ruggieri's opening; that person was neither the king nor his young mistress, on whom the old man had cast the spell of his audacity, but the wily Cosmo. Although far superior to the cleverest courtiers, and, perhaps, to Catherine de' Medici, his

patroness, the astrologer acknowledged his brother Lorenzo as his master.

That aged scholar, shrouded in solitude, had passed judgment upon the sovereigns of Europe, almost all of whom were exhausted by the constant turmoil of an epoch when political crises were so sudden, so unexpected, so absorbing, so intense; he knew their *ennui*, their weariness; he knew with what warmth they pursued the strange, the new, the odd, and especially how they delighted to soar in intellectual spheres, to avoid being always at odds with men and events. To those who have exhausted the interest of politics, naught remains but pure thought; Charles V. had proved it by his abdication. Charles IX., who forged sonnets and swords to escape the consuming anxieties of public affairs in an age when the throne was in no less danger than the king, and who had only the cares of kingship without its pleasures, was certain to be rudely awakened by the audacious denial of his power which Lorenzo had ventured to make. Impiety in religious matters was by no means surprising at a time when Catholicism was being so savagely scrutinized; but the overturning of all religion put forward as a foundation for the wild antics of a mysterious art was certain to make a deep impression on the king and to draw him out of his gloomy preoccupation. Furthermore, a conquest in which all mankind was involved was an undertaking which could but render everything else of trifling consequence in the eyes of the Ruggieri. Upon their

success in imparting that idea to the king depended an important concession which the brothers could not ask and which they must obtain! The essential point was to make Charles forget his suspicions by bringing him face to face with some new idea.

The two Italians were well aware that the stake in that strange game was their own lives; and the glances, at once submissive and proud, with which they met the keen and suspicious glances of Marie and the king, were a whole play in themselves.

"Sire," said Lorenzo Ruggieri, "you have asked me for the truth; but in order to lay it before you in all its nakedness, I must cause you to sound the depth of the supposed well, the abyss from which it is about to come forth. May the nobleman, the poet, forgive us for words which the eldest son of the Church might consider blasphemous! I do not believe that God concerns Himself with the affairs of men."

Although firmly resolved to maintain a kingly stoicism, Charles IX. could not restrain a movement of surprise.

"Except for that conviction, I should have no faith in the miraculous work to which I have devoted myself; but, to pursue it, it is necessary to believe in it; and if God's finger guides everything, I am a madman. Let me inform the king, therefore, that our aim is to obtain a triumph over the present progress of human nature. I am an alchemist, sire. But do not think with the vulgar herd that I seek to make gold! The manufacture of gold is not the object, but an incident, of our investigations; otherwise

our effort would not be called the GREAT WORK! The *great work* is something bolder than that. If, therefore, I should admit to-day the presence of God in matter, at my voice, the flame of furnaces lighted for centuries would be extinguished to-morrow. But to deny the direct action of God is not to deny God, mark that! We place the Author of all things on a far higher plane than that to which earthly religions degrade him. Do not accuse of atheism those who seek immortality. Following Lucifer's example, we are jealous of God, and jealousy predicates passionate love! Although that doctrine is the basis of our labors, all adepts are not imbued with it. Cosmo," said the old man, pointing to his brother, "Cosmo is religious; he pays for masses for the repose of our father's soul and goes to hear them. Your mother's astrologer believes in the divinity of Christ, in the Immaculate Conception, in transubstantiation; he believes in the Pope's indulgences, in hell, in an endless number of things.—His hour is not yet come! for I have cast his horoscope, and he will live well-nigh a hundred years: he is destined to live through two more reigns, and to see two kings of France assassinated."

"Who will be?" queried the king.

"The last of the Valois and the first of the Bourbons," replied Lorenzo. "But Cosmo will come over to my opinions. Indeed, it is impossible to be an alchemist and a Catholic, to believe in man's despotic power over matter and in the sovereignty of the spirit."

"Cosmo will live to be a hundred?" said the king, making no attempt to restrain the terrible contraction of his eyebrows.

"Yes, sire," replied Lorenzo, confidently, "he will die peaceably and in his bed."

"If you have the power to foretell the moment of your death, why do you not know the result of your experiments?"

Charles glanced at Marie Touchet with a smile of triumph.

The two brothers swiftly exchanged a joyous glance.

"He is interested in alchemy," they thought; "we are saved!"

"Our prognostics rest upon the present condition of the relations between nature and man; but what we are striving to do is to change those relations entirely."

The king became thoughtful.

"But if you are certain of dying, you are certain of your failure," he said.

"As our predecessors were!" rejoined Lorenzo, raising his hand and letting it fall again with a solemn and emphatic gesture proportioned to the grandeur of his thought. "But your mind has gone at one leap to the end of the road; we must retrace our steps, sire! If you are not familiar with the ground on which our edifice is built, you may tell us that it will crumble, and judge the science cultivated from century to century by the greatest men as ordinary men judge it."

The king made a sign of assent.

"I believe, then, that this earth belongs to man, that he controls it, and can appropriate all its forces, all the substances of which it consists. Man is not a creation issuing directly from God's hands, but a consequence of the elemental principle sown in the boundless expanse of the ether, where myriads of creatures are produced, differing absolutely in the different planets, because the conditions of life are different. Yes, sire, the subtle motion which we call life takes its source beyond all visible worlds; the different creations divide it up among themselves at the will of their environments, and the least important creatures participate in it, taking so much as they are able to take, at their own risk and peril; it is for them to defend themselves against death. Therein lies the whole secret of alchemy. If man, the most perfect animal on this globe, bore within himself a portion of God, he would not die, but he does die. To avoid this difficulty, Socrates and his school invented the soul. I, the successor of many unknown kings who have guided the destinies of this science, I am for the old theories against the new; I am for the transformations of matter which I see with my eyes as against the impossible immortality of a soul which I do not see. I do not recognize the sphere of the soul. If that sphere existed, the substances whose marvellous combination produces your body, and which are so beautiful in madame, would not be resolved after your death to return each to its own place, water to water, fire

to fire, metal to metal, just as, when my coal is burned out, its elements have returned to their original molecules. If you assert that something survives us, that something is not ourselves; for everything that goes to make up the actual *ego* perishes! Now, it is this actual *ego* which I seek to continue beyond the allotted term of its life; I seek to prolong the duration of the present period of transformation. What! do you say that trees live centuries, and that men live only years, when the former are passive and the latter active! when the former are without speech or motion, and the others talk and move! No creation here on earth should be superior to ours, either in power or in duration. Already we have enlarged the scope of our faculties, we can look into the planets! We should be able to extend our lives! I place life before power. Of what use is power if life escapes us? A sensible man should have no other occupation than to discover, not whether there is another life, but the secret upon which his present life depends, in order that he may continue it at his pleasure. That is the quest which is whitening my hair; but I march on fearlessly in the darkness, leading to the battle the minds which share my faith. Life will be ours some day!"

"But how?" cried the king, rising abruptly.

"As it is the first condition of our faith to believe that the world belongs to man, you must grant me that point," said Lorenzo.

"Very well, so be it!" rejoined the impatient Charles de Valois, fascinated already.

"If we eliminate God from this world, sire, what remains? Man! Let us examine our domain. The material world is made up of elements; those elements are themselves made up of principles. Those principles are resolved into a single one which is endowed with motion. The number THREE is the formula of creation: matter, motion, product!"

"Stop there!" cried the king. "The proof?"

"Do you not see its effects?" replied Lorenzo. "We have subjected to the heat of our crucibles the acorn which contains the germ of an oak as well as the embryo which contains the germ of a man; from that small quantity of matter came forth a pure principle to which some force, some motion, must be joined. In default of a creator, must not that principle impose upon itself the successive forms which constitute our world? for this phenomenon of life is everywhere the same. Yes, in metals as in beings, in plants as in men, life begins with an imperceptible germ which develops itself. There is a primitive principle! let us grasp it at the point where it acts upon itself, where it is a unit, where it is really a principle, not a creature, a cause, not an effect,—we shall see it by itself, formless, ready to assume all the forms which we see it assume in life. When we are face to face with this atom, when we have surprised motion at its starting-point, we shall know its laws; thenceforth, being able to impose upon it whatever form we please among all those which we see it assume, we shall possess gold enough to buy the world, and we will give ourselves centuries of

life to enjoy it. That is what my people and I are seeking. All our powers, all our thoughts, are devoted to that search, nothing can turn us aside from it. An hour squandered upon any other passion would be a theft of a portion of our greatness! Just as you have never known one of your dogs to forget the beast and the quarry, so I have never known one of my patient subjects to be distracted by a woman or by any avaricious motive. If the adept craves wealth and power, that craving is due to our needs: he grasps a fortune as the thirsty dog laps up a drop of water as he runs; because his furnaces demand a diamond to melt or ingots to be pulverized. To every man his own work! This one seeks the secret of vegetable life, he watches the slow growth of plants, he notes the parity of motion in all species and the parity of nutrition; he finds that sunlight, air, and water are everywhere necessary to fructify and nourish. That one examines the blood of animals. Another studies the laws of motion in general and its connection with the revolution of the heavenly bodies. Almost all persist in contending with the intractable nature of metal: for, although we find several elementary principles in all things, we find that all metals resemble one another in their smallest details. Hence the common error concerning our labors. See all those patient, unwearying athletes, always conquered and always returning to the conflict! Mankind is behind us, sire! as the whipper-in is behind your pack. It cries out to us: 'Hasten! Omit nothing! Sacrifice everything, even

a man, ye who sacrifice yourselves! Hasten! Strike off the head and arm of DEATH, my enemy!'—Yes, sire! we are inspired by a sentiment which looks forward to the welfare of generations to come. We have buried a vast number of men—and such men! —who have died in this quest. When we embark upon this career, we may not be working for ourselves; we may die without finding the secret! and what a death is that of the man who does not believe in another life! We are glorious martyrs, we have the egotism of the whole race in our hearts, we live in our successors. As we go forward, we discover secrets with which we endow the mechanical and liberal arts. Our furnaces emit gleams of light which arm societies with more perfect instruments of industry. Powder came forth from our alembics, we shall overcome the lightning. There are political revolutions in our assiduous vigils."

"Can it be possible?" cried the king, rising a second time from his chair.

"Why not?" said the grand master of the new Order of Templars. "*Tradidit mundum disputationibus!* God has abandoned the world to us! Once more, hear what I say: Man is master here below, and all matter is his. All forces, all instruments, are at his disposal. Who created us? motion. What power keeps life in us? motion. Why should not science grasp the secret of that motion? Nothing on earth is lost, nothing escapes from our planet to go elsewhere; otherwise the stars would fall one upon another; thus the waters of the Flood still exist, in

their elemental principles, and not a single drop has vanished. All around us, below, above, are the elements whence issued the innumerable millions of men who thronged the earth before and after the Flood. What do we seek? to grasp the force which disunites; at the same stroke we shall grasp the force which reunites. We are the product of a visible industry. When the waters covered our globe, there came forth men who found the elements of their life in the envelope of the earth, in the air, and in their food. Therefore earth and air contain the principle of human transformations, they take place before our eyes, with other things which are before our eyes; therefore we may surprise that secret, not restricting the search to the life of a single man, but extending it, so far as its duration is concerned, to mankind itself. Thus we are brought face to face with Matter, in which I believe, and which I, the grand master of the Order, propose to penetrate. Christopher Columbus gave a world to the King of Spain; I seek an immortal people for the King of France! Stationed beyond the most distant frontier which separates us from knowledge of Matter, like a patient observer of molecular movements, I destroy forms, I shatter the bonds of every combination, I imitate death in order that I may imitate life! In fine, I knock incessantly at the door of creation and shall continue to knock at it to my last day. When I am dead, the knocker will pass into other hands as indefatigable, just as unknown giants handed it down to me. Fabulous

images, not hitherto understood, like those of Prometheus, Ixion, Adonis, Pan, etc., which form a part of the religious beliefs of all countries, in all ages, inform us that this hope was born with the human race. Chaldæa, India, Persia, Egypt, Greece, the Moors, transmitted to one another Magism, the most exalted of the occult sciences, which holds in trust the fruit of the vigils of each succeeding generation. Therein was the bond of the grand and majestic Order of the Temple. When one of your ancestors, sire, burned the Templars, he burned only the men, the secrets remain in our keeping. The rebuilding of the Temple is the watchword of an unknown nation, races of fearless investigators, all turned toward the Orient of life, all brethren, all inseparable, united by an idea, stamped with the seal of toil. I am the sovereign of that people, first by election and not by birth. I guide them all toward the essence of life! grand master, red-cross knights, companions, novices, one and all we follow the imperceptible molecule which shuns our crucibles, which eludes our eyes; but we will make for ourselves eyes more powerful than those nature gave us, we will discover the primitive atom, the elementary corpuscle courageously sought by all the sages who have preceded us in this sublime pursuit. Sire, when a man is mounted upon that abyss, and when he has divers under his command as bold as my brethren, all other human interests seem very trivial; so we are not dangerous. Religious disputes and political discussions are far from us, we are far above all such

things. When one is contending with nature, one does not descend to throttle a man or two. Moreover, every result, however small, is fixed and determinable in our science; we can measure and predict them all; whereas everything is fluctuating in the combinations into which men and their interests enter. We will subject the diamond to the heat of our crucible, we will make diamonds, we will make gold! We will make vessels move with a little water and a little fire, as one of our brethren did at Barcelona. We will do without the wind, we will make the wind, we will make light, we will transform the face of empires by new industries! But we will never stoop to mount a throne, to be *gehennaed* by the peoples!"

Despite his determination not to allow himself to be deceived by Florentine wiles, the king, as well as his innocent mistress, was already caught, entangled in the folds and meshes of that pompous charlatan's loquacity. The eyes of the lovers attested the dazzling effect of all that mysterious wealth spread out before them; they seemed to see a long line of subterranean caverns full of gnomes at work. The impatience of curiosity dissipated the unrest of suspicion.

"Why, in that case," cried the king, "you are great statesmen, who can give us light."

"No, sire," said Lorenzo, artlessly.

"Why not?" demanded the king.

"Sire, it is given to no mortal to foretell what will result from an assemblage of some millions of men: we can say what one man will do, how long he

will live, whether he will be happy or unhappy; but we cannot say what many wills combined will effect, and it is even more difficult to calculate the fluctuating movements of their interests, for interests are men rather than things; but we can, in solitude, perceive the greater part of the future. The Protestantism which devours you will be devoured in its turn by its own material consequences, which will become theories in due time. Europe is giving its attention to religion to-day; to-morrow, it will attack royalty."

"The Saint Bartholomew, then, was a grand conception?"

"Yes, sire, for if the people triumph, they will have a Saint Bartholomew of their own! When religion and royalty are crushed, the people will turn upon the great; after the great, they will strike at the rich. Finally, when Europe is no longer aught but a flock of men without cohesion, because it is without leaders, it will be consumed by vulgar conquerors. Twenty times already the world has presented that spectacle, and Europe is preparing to present it once more. Ideas devour epochs as men are devoured by their passions. When man shall be cured, it may be that mankind will be cured. Science is the soul of mankind, we are its pontiffs; and he who gives his attention to the soul cares but little about the body."

"How far have you gone?" asked the king.

"We move slowly, but we lose none of our conquests."

"So you are the king of sorcerers?" said the king, piqued to find himself of so little consequence before that man.

The imposing grand master bestowed upon Charles a flaming glance which paralyzed him.

"You are king of men, and I am king of ideas," he replied. "Moreover, if there were real sorcerers, you would have been unable to burn them," he replied, with a touch of irony. "We have our martyrs, too."

"But how can you cast horoscopes?" inquired the king; "how did you know that the man who stood by your window last night was the King of France? What power enabled one of your brethren to tell my mother the destinies of her three sons? Can you, grand master of the order which seeks to mould the world, can you tell me what the queen, my mother, is thinking about at this moment?"

"Yes, sire."

That answer was given before Cosmo could pull his brother's sleeve to bid him be silent.

"Do you know why my brother, the King of Poland, is returning to France?"

"Yes, sire."

"Why?"

"To take your place."

"Our nearest kin are our most cruel enemies!" cried the king, springing to his feet in a rage and pacing the room with long strides. "Kings have neither brothers nor sons nor mother. Coligny was right; my executioners are not the Huguenot

preachers, they are in the Louvre! You are impostors or regicides!—Jacob, call Solern."

"Sire," said Marie Touchet, "the Ruggieri have your word as a gentleman. You desired to taste the tree of science, do not complain of its bitterness."

The king smiled a smile of bitter scorn: his material royalty seemed to him a pitiful thing in face of the boundless intellectual royalty of old Lorenzo Ruggieri. Charles could hardly govern France; the grand master of the red-cross knights governed an intelligent and submissive world.

"Answer me frankly; I pledge my word as a gentleman that your answer, even though it be a confession of horrible crimes, shall be as if it had never been uttered. You dabble in poisons?"

"In order to know what gives life, surely we must know what causes death."

"You possess the secret of preparing many poisons?"

"Yes, sire, but in theory only, not in practice; we know them, but do not make use of them."

"Has my mother ever asked for any?" asked the king, breathlessly.

"Sire," replied Lorenzo, "Queen Catherine is too adroit to employ such methods. She knows that the king or queen who uses poison dies by poison; the Borgias, and Bianca, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, are notable examples of the dangers inherent in such wretched expedients. Everything is known at court. You can kill a poor devil in any

way you choose, and what is the use of poisoning him? But when you attack persons of prominence, is there a single chance of secrecy? The shot that killed Coligny could have been fired only by you, or the queen-mother, or the Guises. No one was deceived as to that. Believe me, one cannot use poison twice in political life with impunity. Princes always have successors. As for the humble, if, like Luther, they become sovereigns by virtue of the power of ideas, one does not kill their doctrines by putting the men out of the way. The queen is a Florentine, she knows that poison can safely be used only as the instrument of personal vengeance. My brother, who has not left her since she came to France, knows how much chagrin Madame Diane caused her; she never dreamed of poisoning her, although she might have done it; what would the king, your father, have said? and yet, had she done it, she would have acted more within her right and with absolute certainty of impunity. Madame de Valentinois still lives."

"And what of the pierced images?" rejoined the king.

"Sire," said Cosmo, "those things are so perfectly innocent, that we make use of them to gratify blind passions, as the doctors give pills made of dough to imaginary invalids. A desperate woman believes that by piercing the heart of an image she brings misfortune on the head of the unfaithful swain whom it represents. What would you have? they are our taxes."

"The Pope sells indulgences," remarked Lorenzo, smiling.

"Has my mother dealt in the images?"

"Of what use are such ridiculous methods to one who is all-powerful?"

"Could Queen Catherine save you at this moment?" rejoined the king, with a threatening expression.

"Why, we are in no danger, sire," said Lorenzo Ruggieri tranquilly. "I knew, before I entered this house, that I should go from it safe and sound, as well as I know how ill-disposed the king will be toward my brother a few days hence; but if he be in any peril, he will triumph over it. If the king reigns by the sword, he reigns by the law as well!" he added, alluding to the celebrated device on a medal struck for Charles IX.

"You know everything, I shall die soon, that is all very well," said the king, concealing his anger beneath a feverish impatience; "but how will my brother die, who, as you say, is to be King Henri III.?"

"A violent death."

"And Monsieur d'Alençon?"

"He will not reign."

"Will Henri de Bourbon reign?"

"Yes, sire."

"And how will he die?"

"A violent death."

"And when I am dead, what will become of madame?" asked the king, indicating Marie Touchet.

LORENZO TO CHARLES IX.

"And when I am dead, what will become of madame?" asked the king, indicating Marie Touchet.

"Madame de Belleville will marry, sire."

"You are impostors!—Send them away, sire," said Marie.

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LORENZO TO CHARLES IX.

"And where I am dared, what peril will become of mademoiselle?" asked the king, hindering Marie Touchet.

"Mademoiselle de Belleville will marry, sire."

"You are impostors!—Send them away, sire," said Marie.



"Madame de Belleville will marry, sire."

"You are impostors!—Send them away, sire," said Marie.

"My love, the Ruggieri have my word as a gentleman," said the king, with a smile.—"Will Marie have children?"

"Yes, sire, madame will live to be more than eighty."

"Shall we have them hanged?" the king asked his mistress.—"And what of my son the Comte d'Auvergne?" he added, going to fetch him.

"Why did you tell him that I should marry?" Marie Touchet asked the brothers during the brief moment that they were alone.

"Madame," replied Lorenzo, with dignity, "the king ordered us to tell the truth, and we are doing so."

"Is it true, then?" said she.

"As true as it is that the Governor of Orléans loves you to distraction."

"But I do not love him!" she cried.

"Very true, madame," said Lorenzo; "but your horoscope declares that you will marry the man who loves you at this moment."

"Can you not lie a little for my sake?" she said, smiling, "for suppose the king should believe your predictions!"

"Is it not necessary, too, that he believe in our innocence?" said Cosmo, with a shrewd glance at the favorite. "The precautions taken by the king in our regard have caused us to conclude, while we

have been confined in this pretty little jail of yours, that the occult sciences have been slandered to him."

"Never fear," replied Marie, "I know him well, and his suspicions have vanished."

"We are innocent," said the tall old man, proudly.

"So much the better," said Marie, "for the king is having your laboratory, your crucibles, and your phials examined by experts at this moment."

The brothers glanced at each other with a smile.

Marie Touchet mistook for amused innocence that smile, which really meant: "Poor fools, do you suppose that, if we make poisons, we do not know where to hide them?"

"Where are the king's people?" inquired Cosmo.

"At René's house," Marie replied.

Cosmo and Lorenzo again exchanged glances which conveyed the same thought: "The Hôtel de Soissons is inviolable!"

The king had so entirely forgotten his suspicions, that, when he went to fetch his son, and Jacob stopped him to hand him a note sent by Chapelain, he opened it with a feeling of absolute certainty that he should find in it what he actually did find concerning the examination of the laboratory; his physician wrote that they found nothing except materials and appliances used in alchemy.

"Will his life be a happy one?" said the king, exhibiting his son to the two alchemists.

"That is for Cosmo to say," said Lorenzo, looking toward his brother.

Cosmo took the child's little hand and examined it very carefully.

"Monsieur," said Charles to the old man, "if you find it necessary to deny the existence of the spirit in order to believe in the possibility of your undertaking, explain to me how you can doubt that which constitutes your power. The thought which you seek to annul is the torch which furnishes light for your investigations. Ah! is it not as if you were to deny motion even while you are moving?" cried the king, who was well-pleased that he had thought of that argument, and glanced triumphantly at his mistress.

"Thought," replied Lorenzo Ruggieri, "is the exercise of an inward sense, as the faculty of seeing several objects and discerning their dimensions and their color is a result of the sense of sight. That has nothing to do with the claims that are made concerning another life. Thought is a faculty which ceases even in our lifetime with the forces which produce it."

"You are logical," said the king, in amazement. "But alchemy is an atheistical science."

"Materialistic, sire, which is a very different matter. Materialism is the outcome of the Indian doctrines transmitted through the mysteries of Isis to Chaldæa and Egypt, and brought to Greece by Pythagoras, one of the demi-gods of mankind: his doctrine of transformations is the mathematics of materialism, the living law of its phases. To each of the different creations which compose the terrestrial

creation belongs the power of retarding the movement which carries it onward into another."

"Then alchemy is the science of sciences!" exclaimed Charles, enthusiastically. "I long to see you at work."

"Whenever you please, sire; you will be no more impatient than the queen, your mother—"

"Oh! so that is why she is so fond of you!" exclaimed the king.

"The House of Medici has secretly encouraged our investigations for more than a century."

"Sire," said Cosmo, "this child will live nearly a hundred years; he will have his trials, but he will be happy and held in honor, as having in his veins the blood of the Valois."

"I will go to visit you, messieurs," said the king, once more in a good humor. "You may go."

The two brothers saluted Marie and Charles IX., and retired. They descended the stairs with solemn faces, not looking at each other or speaking; they did not even turn to look at the windows when they were in the courtyard, feeling certain that the king's eye was watching them: in fact, they did catch a glimpse of Charles at the window when they turned sidewise to pass through the street-gate. When they were on Rue de l'Autruche they looked in front and behind to see whether they were followed or awaited; they went as far as the moats of the Louvre without uttering a word; but at that point, finding that they were alone, Lorenzo said to Cosmo, in the Florentine of that period:

"*Affè d'Iddio! como le abbiamo infinocchiato!*"—*Pardieu!* how we did gull him!—

"*Gran mercès! a lui sta di spartojarsi,*"—Much good may it do him! it is for him to get himself out of the mire,—said Cosmo. "We have done the queen a good turn; I trust she will do as much for me!"

Some days after this scene, which impressed Marie Touchet as much as the king, during one of those moments when the mind is in some sort set free from the body by plenitude of pleasure, Marie cried:

"Charles, I can understand Lorenzo Ruggieri, but Cosmo said nothing at all."

"True," said the king, surprised by that sudden gleam; "there was as much falsehood as truth in their discourse. Those Italians are as supple as the silk they make."

This suspicion explains the animosity which the king manifested toward Cosmo at the time of the trial of the participants in the La Mole and Coconnas conspiracy: finding that Cosmo was one of the artisans of that enterprise, he believed that he had been fooled by the two Italians, for it was demonstrated to him that his mother's astrologer did not devote his attention exclusively to the stars, the powder of projection, and the elementary atom. Lorenzo had left the kingdom.

Notwithstanding the incredulity of a vast number of people on this subject, the events which followed that scene confirmed the prophecies made by the Ruggieri. The king died three months later.

The Comte de Gondi followed Charles IX. to the grave, as his brother, the Maréchal de Retz, had predicted, the latter being a friend of the Ruggieri and a believer in their prognostications.

Marie Touchet married Charles de Balzac, Marquis d'Entragues, Governor of Orléans, by whom she had two daughters. The more celebrated of those daughters, half-sister to the Comte d'Auvergne, was Henri IV.'s mistress, and at the time of the Biron conspiracy tried to place her brother on the throne of France and expel the House of Bourbon.

The Comte d'Auvergne, become Duc d'Angoulême, lived to see the reign of Louis XIV. He coined money on his estates, and altered the legends on the coins, but Louis XIV. allowed him to do as he chose, such great respect had he for the blood of the Valois.

Cosmo Ruggieri lived until the reign of Louis XIII.; he saw the downfall of the Medici in France, and the downfall of the Concini. History has been at great pains to record that he died an atheist, that is to say, a materialist.

The Marquise d'Entragues lived more than eighty years.

The famous Comte de Saint-Germain, who caused so much excitement under Louis XIV., was a pupil of Cosmo and Lorenzo. That famous alchemist was no less than a hundred and thirty years old, the age which some biographers assign to Marion Delorme. The count must have learned from the Ruggieri the anecdotes concerning the Saint Bartholomew and the reigns of the Valois, in which he

was pleased to ascribe a prominent part to himself, always telling them in the first person. The Comte de Saint-Germain was the last of the alchemists who really understood that science; but he left no writings behind him. The cabalistic doctrine set forth in this Study is derived from that mysterious individual.

It is a strange fact that the lives of three men—the old man to whom I owe this information, the Comte de Saint-Germain, and Cosmo Ruggieri—embrace European history from François I. to Napoléon. Only fifty such lives would be required to carry us back to the earliest known period of the world's history.—"What are fifty generations for the study of the mysteries of life?" said the Comte de Saint-Germain.

Paris, November-December 1836.

PART THIRD

THE TWO DREAMS

Bodard de Saint-James, Treasurer of the Navy, aroused more attention and caused more gossip by his luxurious mode of life, than any other financier in Paris in the year 1786. About that time, he built his famous *Folly* at Neuilly, and his wife purchased, to crown the canopy of her bed, an ornament made of feathers, the price of which had horrified the queen. It was much easier then than it is to-day to force one's self into social prominence and to make all Paris talk about one; often nothing more was needed than a bright remark or a woman's whim.

Bodard owned the superb mansion on Place Vendôme which the farmer-general Dangé had, shortly before, been compelled to leave. That illustrious epicurean died, and on the day of his funeral, Monsieur de Bièvre, his intimate friend, laughingly made the remark that *now one could pass through Place Vendôme without danger*. This allusion to the house of the defunct as a gambling-hell was his only funeral oration. The house is the one facing the Chancellerie.

To complete Bodard's history in a few words—he was a poor man, he failed for fourteen millions just after the failure of the Prince de Guéménée. The

stupidity of which he was guilty in not anticipating the *most serene bankruptcy*, to use Lebrun-Pindare's phrase, was the reason why his name was never mentioned. He died, like Bourvalais, Bouret, and many others, in a garret.

It was Madame de Saint-James's ambition to receive none but people of quality,—an old absurdity, constantly renewed. To her mind, even the caps of counsellors in Parliament were of little consequence; she wished to see in her salons titled personages who had at least the *grande entrée* at Versailles. To say that many blue ribbons called upon the financier's wife would be to say what is not true; but it is very certain that she had succeeded in obtaining the goodwill and favorable notice of some members of the Rohan family, as the too notorious affair of the Diamond Necklace proved.

One evening, it was in August, 1786, I believe, I was very much surprised to see in the salon of that treasurer's wife, who was such a prude in the matter of proofs of respectability, two strange faces which seemed to me of a decidedly inferior type. The hostess came to me in a window-recess in which I had designedly ensconced myself.

"Tell me," I said, with a questioning glance in the direction of one of the strangers, "what sort of a creature is that? How do you happen to have such people at your house?"

"He is a charming man."

"Do you see him through the spectacles of love, or am I mistaken?"

"You are not mistaken," she said, with a laugh, "he is as ugly as a caterpillar; but he has done me the most important service that a woman can receive from a man."

As I gazed at her mischievously, she hastened to add:

"He has completely cured me of those horrible blotches which marred my complexion and made me resemble a peasant."

I shrugged my shoulders angrily.

"He's a quack," I cried.

"No," she replied, "he is the pages' surgeon; he has a pretty wit, I promise you, and he writes too. He is very strong in physics."

"If his style resembles his face!" I retorted, with a smile. "But what about the other?"

"Whom do you mean by the other?"

"That smug, spruce little coxcomb, who looks as if he had been drinking verjuice!"

"Why, he belongs to a very good family," she replied. "He comes from some province or other—oh! yes, Artois; he is entrusted with the settlement of a matter in which the cardinal is interested, and His Eminence came in person to introduce him to Monsieur de Saint-James. They both selected Saint-James for arbitrator. In that respect, the provincial exhibited no great wit; but who can the people be who are foolish enough to entrust a lawsuit to that fellow? He's as mild as a sheep and as shy as a girl; His Eminence is very kindly disposed to him."

"What is it all about?"

"Three hundred thousand francs."

"Why, is he an advocate?" I exclaimed, with a slight start.

"Yes," she said.

Overwhelmed with confusion by that humiliating admission, Madame Bodard returned to her place at the faro-table.

All the tables were full. I had nothing to do, no one to talk to; I had just lost two thousand crowns to M. de Laval, whom I had met at the house of an *impure* person. I threw myself into an easy-chair near the fireplace. If there ever was a surprised man on this earth, it certainly was myself, when I saw opposite me, on the other side of the fireplace, the controller-general. M. de Calonne seemed drowsy, or else he was buried in one of those fits of meditation which tyrannize over statesmen. When I called the attention of Beaumarchais, who was walking toward me, to the minister, the father of *Figaro* explained the mystery without speaking. He pointed first to my own head and then to Bodard's with a mischievous gesture, which consisted in holding out his hand with two fingers separated and the rest closed. My first impulse was to rise and go and make some cutting remark to Calonne; but I retained my seat: in the first place, because I was contemplating playing a trick on that favorite; and in the second place, because Beaumarchais took my hand in familiar fashion.

"What do you want, monsieur?" I said.

He winked in the direction of the controller.

"Don't wake him," he whispered, "we are too lucky when he's asleep."

"But sleep means another financial scheme," I rejoined.

"Certainly," observed the statesman, who had divined our words simply by the movement of our lips; "and if it should please God that we sleep a long while, there would not be the awakening which you will see!"

"Monseigneur," said the dramatist, "I have to thank you."

"For what?"

"Monsieur de Mirabeau has started for Berlin. I do not know that we might not both have been drowned in that affair of the Waters."

"You have too much *memory* and too little gratitude," retorted the minister, dryly, annoyed to have one of his secrets revealed before me.

"That is possible," said Beaumarchais, stung to the quick, "but I have millions which will adjust many accounts."

Calonne pretended not to hear.

It was half-past twelve when play ceased. We took our places at table. There were ten of us: Bodard and his wife, the controller-general, Beaumarchais, the two strangers, two pretty women whose names may not be mentioned, and a farmer-general whose name, I believe, was Lavoisier. Of thirty persons whom I found in the salon when I arrived, only those ten remained. Even the two *creatures* consented to sup with us only at the

urgent entreaty of Madame de Saint-James, who thought that she paid her debt to one by feeding him, and perhaps invited the other to please her husband, with whom she was inclined to be coquettish, I cannot quite say why. After all, Monsieur de Calonne was a power, and if anyone had occasion to be annoyed, it was myself.

The supper began by being horribly dreary. Those two strangers and the farmer-general embarrassed us. I motioned to Beaumarchais to ply with drink the son of Æsculapius whom he had at his right, giving him to understand that I would do as much for the lawyer. As that was the only means we had of amusing ourselves, and as it gave promise of impertinences on the part of the two men, which amused us in anticipation, Monsieur de Calonne approved my plan. In two seconds, the three ladies joined our bacchanalian conspiracy. They promised, by most significant glances, to play their part, and the Sillery filled the glasses more than once with its silvery foam. The surgeon was an easy victim; but when I attempted to pour a second bumper for my neighbor, he said, with the cool politeness of a money-lender, that he would not drink any more.

At that moment, by some chance or other, Madame de Saint-James had introduced the subject of the magnificent suppers given by the Cardinal de Rohan to Count Cagliostro. I was paying no special attention to what the mistress of the house said; for, since her replies to my questions, I had

been watching with unconquerable curiosity the pinched, sallow face of my neighbor, whose most prominent feature was a nose, turned up and pointed at the same time, which made him at times resemble a weasel. Suddenly his cheeks flushed as he heard Madame de Saint-James disputing with Monsieur de Calonne.

"But I assure you, monsieur, that I have seen Queen Cleopatra," she was saying with an imperious air.

"I believe you, madame," interposed my neighbor. "I myself have spoken to Catherine de' Medici."

"Oho!" exclaimed Monsieur de Calonne.

The little provincial said the words in a voice which had an indefinable sonorous quality, if we may borrow that term from the vocabulary of physical science. That sudden bell-like utterance from a man who had hardly spoken hitherto, and always in a low and pleasantly modulated tone, surprised us to the last degree.

"Why, he is talking!" cried the surgeon, who was in a very satisfactory condition, thanks to Beaumarchais's efforts.

"His neighbor must have pressed a spring," observed the satirist.

My man flushed slightly when he heard the words, although they were spoken hardly above a whisper.

"And how was the late queen?" queried Calonne.

"I would not assert positively that the person with whom I supped last night was Catherine de'

Medici herself. Such a prodigy will justly seem impossible to a Christian as well as to a philosopher," replied the advocate, resting the tips of his fingers lightly on the table and leaning back in his chair as if he proposed to speak at some length. "Nevertheless, I am able to swear that the woman resembled Catherine de' Medici as closely as if she were her sister. She whom I saw wore a black velvet dress absolutely like the one which that queen wears in the portrait owned by the king; her head was covered with the characteristic velvet cap; and, finally, she had the pale complexion and the features with which you are all familiar. I could not refrain from exhibiting my surprise to His Eminence. The rapidity of the evocation seemed to me the more marvellous, because Count Cagliostro could not have guessed the name of the personage with whom I was about to desire an interview. I was confounded. The magic of the spectacle presented by a supper-table at which were seated famous women of the past deprived me of all presence of mind. I listened, afraid to ask questions. When I escaped from the meshes of that witchcraft, about midnight, I almost doubted myself. But all that marvellous experience seemed to me perfectly natural in comparison with the hallucination I was still to undergo. I do not know how I can describe in words the condition of my senses. But I declare, in all the sincerity of my heart, that I am no longer surprised that there should be found of old minds weak enough, or strong enough, to

believe in the mysteries of magic and the power of the devil. For my own part, until I am more fully informed, I regard as possible the apparitions described by Cardan and other thaumaturgists."

These words, uttered with incredible force of diction, were of a nature to arouse the most intense curiosity in all the guests. So our eyes all turned toward the speaker, and we sat very still. Our eyes alone betrayed the presence of life by reflecting the flickering light of the candles in the candelabra. By dint of gazing steadfastly at the stranger, it seemed as if we could see the pores of his face, especially those of his forehead, exude the inward emotion which agitated him. Apparently cold and precise, he seemed to contain a concealed fire, whose flame reacted upon us.

"I do not know," he continued, "whether the face that had been evoked made itself invisible and followed me; but as soon as I laid my head upon my pillow, I saw Catherine's tall figure standing before me. I felt instinctively that I was in a luminous sphere, for my eyes, which were fastened upon the queen with painful fixity, saw nothing but her. Suddenly she leaned toward me—"

At these words, the ladies with one accord made a gesture of interest.

"But I am not sure that I ought to go on," continued the advocate; "although I am inclined to think that it was only a dream, what I still have to tell is very serious."

"Is it a question of religion?" asked Beaumarchais.

"Or is there something improper in it?" said Calonne. "The ladies will forgive you."

"It is a question of government," replied the advocate.

"Go on," remarked the minister, "Voltaire, Diderot, and their like have trained our ears pretty thoroughly."

He became very attentive, and his neighbor, Madame de Genlis, very much preoccupied. The provincial still hesitated. Thereupon Beaumarchais said to him, sharply:

"Pray, go on, master! don't you know that when the laws allow so little liberty, the people take their revenge in morals?"

Thereupon our fellow-guest began:

"Whether it was that certain ideas were fermenting in my mind, unknown to me, or that I was impelled by some external power, I said to her:

"'Ah! madame, you committed a very grave crime!'

"'What was that?' she asked, in a grave tone.

"'The crime for which the signal was given by the bell on the Palais de Justice, on the 24th of August.'

"She smiled scornfully, and several deep wrinkles appeared on her pallid cheeks.

"'Do you call that a crime?' she rejoined; 'that was only a misfortune. The undertaking, which was poorly managed, having missed its aim, did not result in the benefit which we expected for France, Europe, and the Catholic Church. What would you

have! our orders were imperfectly obeyed. We could not find as many Montlucs as we needed. Posterity will not hold us responsible for the lack of communications which prevented us from imparting to our undertaking that unity of action which is essential to great *coups d'Etat:* there was the misfortune! If, on the 25th of August, not the shadow of a Huguenot had remained in France, my name would have been handed down to the most distant future ages as that of a lovely image of Providence. How often did the perspicacious minds of Sixtus V., Richelieu, and Bossuet secretly blame me for failing in my undertaking after daring to conceive it! And what sincere regret was felt for my death! Thirty years after the Saint Bartholomew, the disease still endured; it had already caused ten times more noble blood to flow than remained to be shed on August 26, 1572. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in honor of which you caused medals to be struck, cost more tears, more blood, and more money, did more to kill prosperity in France, than three Saint Bartholomews. Letellier was able to carry out with a penful of ink the decree which the throne had secretly promulgated since my death; but if that far-reaching execution was necessary on the 25th of August, 1572, on the 25th of August, 1685, it was useless. Under Henri de Valois's second son, heresy was hardly pregnant; under Henri de Bourbon's second son, that teeming mother had cast her spawn over the whole universe. You accuse me of a crime and you erect statues to the son of Anne of Austria!

Yet he and I tried to accomplish the same thing: he succeeded, I failed; but Louis XIV. found the Protestants unarmed, whereas in my reign they had powerful armies, statesmen, generals, and Germany on their side.'

"I felt a sort of inward thrill creep over me as she spoke thus, slowly and distinctly. I fancied that I was breathing the fumes of the blood of Heaven knows how many victims. Catherine had increased in stature. She was like an evil spirit, and it seemed to me that she was trying to force her way into my conscience, in search of repose."

"He dreamed that," said Beaumarchais, in an undertone; "he certainly did not invent it."

"'My brain is bewildered,' I said to the queen. 'You applaud yourself for an act which three generations condemn, stigmatize as a crime, and—'

"'Say further,' she interposed, 'that all subsequent pens have been even more unjust to me than my contemporaries were. No one has undertaken my defence. I am accused of ambition, I, a sovereign, and rich beyond desire. I am accused of cruelty, I, who have upon my conscience the cutting off of only two heads. And even to the most impartial minds I am still a puzzling problem. Do you imagine, forsooth, that I was swayed by feelings of hatred, that I breathed naught but rage and vengeance?'

"She smiled pityingly.

"'I was as calm and cold as reason itself. I condemned the Huguenots pitilessly, but without temper; they were the rotten orange in my basket of fruit.

As Queen of England, I would have dealt with the Catholics in the same way, if they had been seditious. In order that our power should have any life at all in those days, it was essential that there should be but one God, one faith, one master in the State. Luckily for me, I carved my justification imperishably in one remark. When Birague mistakenly announced the loss of the battle of Dreux, I exclaimed: "Very well, we will go to the conventicle!"—You accuse me of hating those who professed the Reformed religion? I esteemed them greatly and I did not know them. If I felt aversion for any political leaders, it was for the cowardly Cardinal de Lorraine, and for his brother, a shrewd and brutal soldier, both of whom kept spies about me. They were my children's foes, they sought to tear the crown from their hands; I saw them every day, and they drove me to frenzy. If we had not brought about the Saint Bartholomew, the Guises would have done it with the aid of Rome and its monks. The League, which was not powerful until I was an old woman, would have begun in 1573.'

"'But, madame, instead of ordering that horrible slaughter,—pray excuse my frankness,—why not have employed the boundless resources of your political system in giving to the reformers the wise institutions which made the reign of Henri IV. so glorious and so peaceful?'

"She smiled again, shrugged her shoulders, and the deep wrinkles gave to her pale face an expression of bitter irony.

"'Nations,' she said, 'need rest after desperate struggles: that is the secret of that reign. But Henri IV. committed two irreparable mistakes: he neither abjured Protestantism, nor allowed France to be Catholic, after becoming a Catholic himself. He alone found himself in a position of change without shaking France to its foundations. Either no stole or no conventicle! that should have been his thought. To leave in a government two hostile elements with nothing to hold the balance between them, that is a crime in a king, for thus he sows the seed of revolution. To God alone does it belong to bring good and evil constantly face to face in His work. But it may be that that sentence was inscribed at the root of the policy of Henri IV., and perhaps it caused his death. It is impossible that Sully did not cast a covetous glance at the vast possessions of the clergy, which, by the way, the clergy did not absolutely own, for the nobility squandered at least two-thirds of their revenues. Sully was a Huguenot, but he owned abbeys.'

"She paused, and seemed to reflect.

"'But,' she continued, 'do you realize that it is the niece of a Pope whom you are calling to account for her Catholicism?'

"Again she paused.

"'After all, I could have been a Calvinist with a good heart,' she added, with a gesture of indifference. 'The superior men of your age cannot still believe that religion counted for aught in that suit, the most important of all that Europe ever tried, a

THE APPARITION

"I do not know," he continued, "whether the face was had been evoked under the influence of fear or whether it was a reality. But as soon as I had my head upon my pillow, I saw Catherine's pale figure standing before me."

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THE APPARATION

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THE APPARITION

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THE APPARITION

"I do not know," he continued, "whether the figure that had been crouched inside itself invisible and followed me; but as soon as I laid my head upon my pillow, I saw Catherine's tall figure standing before me."

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far-reaching revolution retarded by trivial causes which did not prevent it from bursting on the world, as I failed to strangle it. A revolution,' she continued, with a searching glance at me, 'which is still in progress and which you may finish. Yes, *you* who listen to me!'

"I shuddered.

"'What! has no one realized as yet that the old interests and the new interests seized upon Rome and Luther merely as banners? Why! to avoid a struggle almost identical with this, Louis IX., by leading away from France a hundred-fold more people than I condemned to death, and leaving them on the sands of Egypt, earned the name of Saint-Louis! And I?—But I failed!'

"She beat her head, and said nothing for a moment. It was no longer a queen whom I saw before me, but rather one of those ancient Druidesses who sacrificed human beings, and who had the art of unrolling the pages of the future by exhuming the information buried in the past. But soon she raised her queenly and majestic face once more.

"'By directing the attention of the middle class to the abuses of the Roman Church,' she said, 'Luther and Calvin aroused throughout Europe a spirit of investigation which inevitably led the people to insist upon examining everything. Examination leads to doubt. Instead of the faith that is essential to the social structure, they dragged after them and into distant lands an inquisitive philosophy, armed with hammers, greedy for ruins. Science burst

forth, resplendent with its false brilliancy, from the bosom of heresy. The question at issue was not so much reform within the Church, as the indefinite liberty of man, which is the death of all power. I have seen it myself. The consequence of the successes obtained by the Huguenots in their struggle against the priesthood, even then more powerfully armed and more formidable than the crown, was the ruin of the monarchical power built up by Louis XI. at such enormous expense on the ruins of feudalism. It involved nothing less than the annihilation of religion and royalty, over whose remains all the middle classes of Europe were to form a compact. Therefore the struggle was a war to the death between the new coalitions and the laws, the ancient beliefs. The Catholics represented the material interests of the monarchy, the nobles, and the clergy. It was a duel without quarter between two giants,—the Saint Bartholomew, unfortunately, was only a wound. Remember that, to spare a few drops of blood at an opportune moment, it is allowed to be shed later in torrents. The intelligence which soars above a nation cannot avoid one misfortune, the misfortune of finding no peers by whom to be impartially tried when it has succumbed beneath the weight of an unlucky event. My peers were few, fools were in the majority: everything is explained by those two facts. If my name is held in execration in France, the blame must be laid upon those mediocre minds which form the great bulk of each succeeding generation. In the great crises through which I passed,

to reign did not mean to give audiences, to review armies, to sign decrees. I may have made mistakes, I was only a woman. But why did not a man appear who was in advance of his generation? The Duke of Alva was a heart of bronze, Philip II. was stupefied by his ultra-Catholicism, Henri IV. was a gambling soldier and a rake, the admiral was obstinate on principle. Louis XI. came too early, Richelieu too late. Virtuous or criminal, whether the Saint Bartholomew be attributed to me or not, I accept the burden; I shall remain, as it were, the visible link of an invisible chain connecting those two great men. Some day, paradoxical writers will ask themselves whether the nations have not sometimes bestowed the name of executioner upon victims. It will not be the first time that mankind has preferred to immolate a god rather than accuse itself. You are all inclined to shed upon two hundred knaves opportunely sacrificed the tears which you deny to the misfortunes of a generation, a century, or a world. Lastly, you forget that political liberty, the tranquillity of a nation, aye, science itself, are gifts for which destiny imposes taxes of blood!'

"'May not the nations be happy some day at less cost?' I cried, with tears in my eyes.

"'Truth comes forth from its well, only to take baths of blood wherein it takes on new life. Christianity itself—the essence of all truth, since it comes from God—was it established without martyrs? did not blood flow in torrents? will it not always flow? You will know, you who are destined to be one of the

masons of the social edifice begun by the apostles. So long as you pass your levelling instrument over men's heads, you will be applauded; but when you attempt to take up the trowel, you will be killed.'

"Blood! blood! that word rang in my ears like a knell.

"'In your judgment, then,' I said, 'Protestantism would have had the right to reason as you did?'

"Catherine had disappeared, as if a breath had extinguished the supernatural light which enabled my mind to see that figure, whose proportions had become gigantic. I suddenly discovered that there was a part of my inner self which assented to the atrocious doctrines put forth by the Italian. I awoke bathed in perspiration, weeping, just at the moment when my victorious common sense was saying to me in a soft voice that it was the function neither of a king nor of a nation to apply those principles, worthy of a race of atheists."

"And how will the crumbling monarchies be saved?" queried Beaumarchais.

"God is at hand, monsieur," was my neighbor's reply.

"In that case," said Monsieur de Calonne, with the incredible frivolity which was characteristic of him, "we have the resource of believing, in accordance with Bossuet's gospel, that we are God's instruments."

As soon as the ladies had discovered that the dream consisted in an interview between the queen and the lawyer, they began to whisper. I will spare

you a repetition of the phrases followed by exclamation points with which they interspersed the advocate's narrative. But such remarks as: "He is a deathly bore!—Pray, my dear, when will he finish?" reached my ear.

When the stranger ceased to speak, the ladies held their peace. Monsieur Bodard was asleep. The half-tipsy surgeon, Lavoisier, Beaumarchais, and I were the only ones who had listened; Monsieur de Calonne was jesting with his fair neighbor. At that moment, there was a touch of solemnity in the silence. The flame of the candles seemed to me to have a magic coloring. One and the same sentiment had attached us all by mysterious bonds to that man who, for my part, enabled me to conceive the inexplicable effects of fanaticism. Nothing less than the hollow, cavernous voice of Beaumarchais's neighbor would have sufficed to arouse us.

"I, too, have dreamed!" he cried.

Thereupon I looked more particularly at the surgeon, and experienced an indefinable feeling of horror. His earthy complexion, his features, at once ignoble and grand, presented an exact idea of what you will allow me to call *canaille*. A few bluish and black spots were scattered over his face, like splashes of mud, and his eyes emitted a threatening flame. That face seemed more forbidding than it really was, perhaps because of the snow heaped on his head by a *coiffure à frimas*.

"That man must bury many a patient," I said to my neighbor.

"I would not trust my dog to him," he replied.

"I hate him instinctively."

"For my part, I despise him."

"But how unjust we are, after all!" I rejoined.

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* he may become as famous as Volange the actor by the day after to-morrow," replied the stranger.

Monsieur de Calonne called my attention to the surgeon with a gesture which seemed to say: "That fellow seems to me likely to be amusing."

"Do you happen to have dreamed of a queen?" asked Beaumarchais.

"No, I dreamed of a nation," he replied, with an emphasis which made us laugh. "I was attending a patient whose leg I was to amputate on the day after my dream."

"And did you find the nation in your patient's leg?" inquired Monsieur de Calonne.

"Precisely," replied the surgeon.

"How amusing he is!" cried the Comtesse de Genlis.

"I was surprised enough," said the narrator, in nowise embarrassed by the interruptions, and thrusting his hands into his breeches pockets, "to find someone to speak to in that leg. I enjoyed the extraordinary power of entering into my patient's body. When I first found myself under his skin, I saw a marvellous number of tiny beings who were moving about, thinking and arguing. Some lived in the man's body, others in his mind. His ideas were beings which were born, grew to maturity, and died.

They were ill, in good health, merry, sad, and each of them had its own special physiognomy; they fought or caressed one another. Some ideas rushed forth to live in the intellectual world. I suddenly realized that there were two universes, the visible universe and the invisible; that the earth had, like man, a body and a soul. Nature was illumined for me, and I comprehended its immensity when I saw the ocean of beings scattered about everywhere, in masses and by species, making one single uniform animate Matter, from the marbles in the earth up to God. Magnificent spectacle! In a word, there was a universe in my patient. When I plunged my knife into his gangrened leg, I crushed a myriad of those creatures.—You laugh, mesdames, to learn that you are given over to the beasts—"

"No personalities," said Monsieur de Calonne, "speak for yourself and your patient."

"My man, frightened by the cries of his animalculæ, attempted to interrupt my operation; but I went on, and I told him that malignant organisms were already eating into the bones. He made a movement to resist, not understanding what I was about to do for his well-being, and my knife entered my own side."

"He is stupid," said Lavoisier.

"No," rejoined Beaumarchais, "he is drunk."

"But, messieurs, my dream has a meaning," cried the surgeon.

"Oh! oh!" cried Bodard, waking up, "my leg is asleep."

"Monsieur," said his wife, "your animalculæ are dead."

"That man has a vocation," observed my neighbor, who had gazed imperturbably at the surgeon while he was speaking.

"It is to monsieur's vocation," said the ill-favored guest, "what action is to speech, the body to the mind."

But his tongue thickened, he could not pronounce his words distinctly. Luckily for us, the conversation took a different turn. Half an hour later, we had forgotten the pages' surgeon, who was sound asleep. The rain was pouring in torrents when we rose from the table.

"The lawyer is no fool," I said to Beaumarchais.

"Oh! he is stolid and cold. But you see that the provinces still contain some worthy folk who take political theories and our French history seriously. It is a leaven which will work."

"Have you your carriage?" Madame de Saint-James asked me.

"No," I answered, dryly. "I did not know that I should need it to-night. I suppose you would like me to drive the controller home? Can it be that he came to your house *en polisson?*"

That expression, then much in vogue, was applied to a person who, in the garb of a coachman, drove his own carriage to Marly. Madame de Saint-James walked hastily away, rang, ordered the Saint-James equipage, and took the lawyer aside.

"Monsieur de Robespierre, will you do me the

favor to take Monsieur Marat home? for he is unable to stand," she said.

"Gladly, madame," replied Monsieur de Robespierre, gallantly, "I should be glad if you would command me to do something more difficult."

Paris, January 1828.

NOTE

The following is the ballad, published by Abbé de la Place in his collection of interesting miscellany, where also is to be found the dissertation to which we have referred :

LE CONVOI DU DUC DE GUISE

Qui veut ouïr chanson? (*Bis.*)
C'est du grand duc de Guise;
Et bon bon bon bon,
Di dan di dan bon,
C'est du grand duc de Guise !

(This last line was probably given in a comical manner.)

Qui est mort et enterré.

Qui est mort et enterré. (*Bis.*)
Aux quatre coins du poêle,
Et bon, etc.,
Quatre gentilshomm's y avoit.

Quatre gentilshomm's y avoit. (*Bis.*)
L'un portoit son grand casque,
Et bon, etc.,
Et l'autre ses pistolets.

Et l'autre ses pistolets, (*Bis.*)
Et l'autre son épée,
Et bon, etc.,
Qui tant d'huguenots a tués.

Qui tant d'hugu'nots a tués. (*Bis.*)
Venoit le quatrième,
Et bon, etc.,
Qui étoit le plus dolent.

Qui étoit le plus dolent; (*Bis.*)
Après venoient les pages,
Et bon, etc.,
Et les valets de pied.

Et les valets de pied, (*Bis.*)
Avecque de grands crêpes,
Et bon, etc.,
Et des souliers cirés.

Et des souliers cirés, (*Bis.*)
Et des beaux bas d'estame,
Et bon, etc.,
Et des culottes de piau.

Et des culottes de piau. (*Bis.*)
La cérémonie faite,
Et bon, etc.,
Chacun s'alla coucher.

Chacun s'alla coucher: (*Bis.*)
Les uns avec leurs femmes,
Et bon, etc.,
Et les autres tout seuls.

This curious discovery would seem to establish to a certain extent the culpability of Théodore de Bèze, who thus attempted to lessen by ridicule the horror caused by that assassination. It seems that the air was the principal merit of this ditty.

TRANSLATION

THE FUNERAL OF THE DUC DE GUISE

Who'll listen to a song ?
'Tis of the great Duc de Guise;
Bon bon, etc.,
Who now is dead and buried.

Who now is dead and buried.
At the corners of the pall,
Bon bon, etc.,
There were four gentlemen.

There were four gentlemen;
One wore his helmet tall,
Bon bon, etc.,
Another his pistols bore.

Another his pistols bore,
And another his trusty sword,
Bon bon, etc.,
Which slew Huguenots galore.

Which slew Huguenots galore.
And then there came the fourth,
Bon bon, etc.,
Most sorrowful of all.

Most sorrowful of all;
Behind him came the pages,
Bon bon, etc.,
And then the footmen all.

And then the footmen all,
With long crêpes on their arms
Bon bon, etc.,
And shoes all nicely waxed.

And shoes all nicely waxed,
And worsted stockings on,
Bon bon, etc.,
And breeches made of skin.

And breeches made of skin.
When the services were done,
Bon bon, etc.,
They all went off to bed.

They all went off to bed;
Some with their good wives,
Bon bon, etc.,
And others all alone.

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